

# INDRIYA NIGRAHA

ESOTERIC HINDU TECHNIQUES  
FOR SELF-CONTROL



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# **Indriya Nigraha**

**Esoteric Hindu Techniques**

**For Self-Control**

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## **Dedication**

To the God, the sages of India, visible and invisible, whose lives exemplify perfect mastery over the senses.

## Preface

When the outward-rushing currents of the five senses are reined in, the limitless well-spring of inner clarity appears. The Sanskrit canon calls this art **indriya nigrahaṇa**—sense-control. This e-book consolidates millennia-old prescriptions—from the Vedas to Hatha and Tantra texts—and translates them into an actionable program for the twenty-first-century seeker. Citations are provided so the reader can verify every verse and reflect on its depth.

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# Introduction

**Indriya nigraha** (sense restraint) has been a cornerstone of spiritual discipline in Hindu philosophy for millennia. Ancient Sanskrit scriptures—from the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita to Yoga Sutras and Puranas—prescribe numerous techniques to master the **indriyas** (sense organs) and the mind. The goal is not mere repression, but a transformation of our relationship with sense stimuli, leading ultimately to inner peace and self-realization. As the Bhagavad Gita explains, forcing the senses away from pleasures is insufficient if the “taste” for them remains; true release comes when one experiences a higher spiritual satisfaction. In other words, by redirecting our awareness to a higher ideal—be it devotion to God, inner Self, or noble pursuits—the lower cravings naturally wither away. Saint Ramakrishna aptly said, *“Devotion is love for the highest; and the lowest shall fall away by itself.”*

This e-book explores **15 time-tested techniques for indriya-nigraha**, updating them for the modern seeker. Each technique is rooted in ancient wisdom, supported by Sanskrit verses from multiple scriptures and authoritative commentaries. Finally, we discuss how to integrate these practices into daily life—through a morning routine and moment-to-moment practice—so that sense-control is not a sporadic effort but a way of living. By diligently following these methods, anyone can cultivate a calm, steadfast mind and enjoy the “unwavering bliss” of one’s true Self, described in Vedanta as **sat–chit–ānanda** (Existence–Consciousness–Bliss).

Let us journey through these techniques, keeping in mind Lord Krishna’s assurance that progress in self-mastery not only comes from our effort but is greatly aided by divine grace.



# Technique 1: Physical Detachment of the Senses from Their Objects

The first strategy is **literal, physical restraint** of the senses—removing the sense organs from contact with tempting objects. This could mean closing the eyes or ears, or simply walking away from a tempting sight, sound, or other stimulus. The logic is simple: just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs for safety, we too can withdraw our senses to protect our mind. **Śhrī Krishna** uses exactly this analogy in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

**“Yadā samharate cāyaṁ kūrmo ’ngānīva sarvaśaḥ; indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyas-tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā** – When, like the tortoise which withdraws its limbs on all sides, one withdraws the senses from sense-objects, then his wisdom is firmly established.”

By physically **breaking contact**, we prevent further stimulation of desires. The *Katha Upanishad* also extols turning the senses inward. It states that the Creator made our senses outward-going by default, so we naturally look outward; **but a wise seeker turns the gaze within:**

**“parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūḥ tasmāt parāṇ paśyati nāntarātman | kaścid dhīraḥ pratyag ātmānam aikṣat āvṛtta-cakṣur amṛtatvam icchan //** – The self-existent Lord destroyed (orientated) the senses to face outward, hence beings look outward and not at the ātman within. **But a certain wise person, wishing for immortality, turns his eyes inward and sees the inner Self.”**

**Translation:** The senses naturally seek external objects, but a discerning person withdraws them (like shutting the eyes or seeking solitude) and thereby beholds the inner Self, aspiring for the nectar of immortality.

In practice, you might:

- **Close the Sense Gates:** When overwhelmed, close your eyes, cover your ears, or sit in silence. *For example*, if violent media agitates you, turn off the screen. Scriptures call this **pratyāhāra**, sense-withdrawal. In *Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras*, pratyahara is described as the senses imitating the mind by disengaging from their objects.
- **Avoid Tempting Environments:** Ancient wisdom suggests removing yourself from temptation. The *Manu Smṛti* advises not to test one’s resolve unnecessarily; better to physically avoid the pull of sense-objects. As one Sanskrit maxim says, “Even a learned man should shun evil company, just as a jeweled snake is still dangerous” – implying we must **steer clear of stimuli or associates that inflame our senses.**

Such restraint is the initial step. By “fasting” the senses, we weaken their compulsions. Yet, mere physical detachment, while useful, is fragile—the *latent desire* (“*taste*”) may remain in the mind, *lying in wait*. The next technique addresses how to uproot that latent desire through higher engagement.

## Technique 2: Redirecting Focus to Higher Pursuits (Sublimation)

Simply shutting off sense pleasures is not a permanent solution; the lurking craving (“**rasa**”) can return once the restraint is lifted. Hence, the scriptures recommend **sublimation**: divert the mind to *nobler activities* and *higher joys*, so that lower pleasures naturally lose appeal. In spiritual terms, this means channeling the emotional energy behind lust, greed, etc., into **devotion (bhakti)**, pursuit of **higher knowledge (jnana)**, selfless service, creative arts, or meditation on the Divine. When the mind gets a “*higher taste*”, it drops the lower tastes effortlessly.

The *Bhagavad Gita* beautifully explains this dynamic:

“*Viṣayā vinivartante nīrāhāsyā dehinaḥ, rasa-varjaṁ raso’pyasya paraṁ dṛṣṭvā nivartate* – Objects of the senses cease for the abstinent person, leaving the longing (rasa) behind. **But this longing too ceases when one realizes the Supreme.**”

In other words, forcibly abstaining from sense enjoyment may silence it temporarily, but the subtle craving persists; **however, upon experiencing a higher joy (paramānanda), even that subtle craving departs.** The *Gita* commentator further notes: “The Gita does not teach a dry suppression of desires, but a beautiful path of sublimation by directing them toward God”. The *Taittirīya Upanishad* concurs: “*raso vai saḥ ... labdhvā ānandī bhavati*” – “Brahman (the Supreme) is Bliss; attaining That, the soul becomes full of bliss”. Thus, when the soul obtains the higher taste of divine bliss, **it naturally loses interest in lower sensory thrills.**

### Practical ways to implement sublimation:

- **Bhakti (Devotion):** Channel emotional energy into devotion. Sing kīrtans, chant God’s names, or read inspiring lives of saints when sense cravings strike. *For example*, if lust agitates you, divert that intensity into loving service of your deity or compassionate action. “Devotion is love for the highest,” as Ramakrishna said; once that love fires the heart, base desires “fall away by themselves”. The *Śhrīmad Bhāgavatam* (9.19.14) warns that indulging desires is like pouring ghee into fire—it only blazes more. Instead, **satisfy the soul with God’s nectar**, and the fire of worldly desire will die down.
- **Jnana (Higher Knowledge):** Engage the intellect in profound study—philosophy, scripture, science, uplifting literature—anything that elevates your perspective. The *Bhagavatam* states that **hearing and discussing spiritual knowledge in saintly association** generates a sublime joy in the heart that makes worldly attractions seem pale. By constantly *feeding the mind higher truths*, you starve its taste for trivia and vice.
- **Creative or Service Outlet:** Many great yogis and teachers sublimated personal desires by pouring themselves into service and creativity. Art, music, social work, or mentorship can transmute individual passion into a wider love that uplifts oneself and others. For example, Mahatma Gandhi redirected youthful lust into a vow of brahmacharya and poured that energy into serving a nation. Psychology too recognizes this principle: Dr. Carl Jung noted that unexpressed libidinal energy can be “**transmuted**” into artistic or spiritual enthusiasm, a process he termed *sublimation*.

In essence, whenever a lower impulse arises, **have a higher engagement ready**. As Vedic wisdom says: “*Param dṛṣṭvā nivartate*” – by perceiving a higher taste, one gives up the lower. You’re not left in a vacuum; you are *filled* with something more satisfying. Over time, this practice forms new habits of enjoyment that are uplifting and free of the guilt and agitation sensual indulgences leave behind.

## Technique 3: Establishing the Inner Hierarchy of Control – The Chariot Analogy

To control the senses, we must know **who is in charge** within us. The Upanishads often illustrate the *inner hierarchy* through a beautiful metaphor: the **chariot of the Self**. In the *Kaṭha Upanishad*, Yama (the Lord of Death) teaches the seeker Naciketas that the **body is a chariot**, the **senses are the horses**, the **mind (manas)** is the reins, the **intellect (buddhi)** is the charioteer, and the **Self (ātman)** is the passenger riding in the chariot. Let's see the original verses:

*“Ātmānaṁ rathinaṁ viddhi śarīraṁ ratham eva tu; buddhiṁ tu sārathiṁ viddhi manaḥ pragraham eva ca. Indriyāṇi hayān āhur viṣayāṁś teṣu gocarān; ātmendriya-mano-yuktaṁ bhoktety āhur manīṣiṇaḥ”* (Kaṭha Upanishad 1.3.3-4)

**Translation:** “Know the Self to be the rider in the chariot, and the body to be the chariot. Know the intellect to be the charioteer, and the mind to be the reins. The senses are the horses, and the sense-objects are the paths they travel. The Self, united with mind and senses, is the enjoyer (experiencer), say the wise.”

In this analogy, **our higher faculties should govern the lower**: the intellect (discrimination, **viveka**) must hold the reins of the mind steady; the disciplined mind in turn directs the senses (horses) along the proper path of progress. If *viveka* (intelligent discrimination) sleeps and the mind is unrestrained, the horses run wherever they please, dragging the chariot into danger. The Upanishad continues: “*yaḥ tu avijñānavān bhavati... tasyendriyāṇy avaśyāni duṣṭāśvā iva sāratheḥ*” – “The person lacking understanding, with an uncontrolled mind, has senses that are unruly like the bad horses of a charioteer”. In contrast, “*yaḥ tu vijñānavān bhavati... tasyendriyāṇi vaśyāni sadāśvā iva sāratheḥ*” – “The person of discernment, with a well-controlled mind, has senses obedient like good horses of a charioteer.”

By regularly **contemplating this hierarchy**, we imprint who should obey whom within us. *I am the ātman (the passenger and true owner of the chariot)*, fundamentally separate from the mind and senses – this perspective is crucial. My **buddhi** (intellect) is my charioteer, meant to guide. My **manas** (mind) is just a tool (the reins) to direct the senses. And the **indriyas** (senses) are mere servants (the horses) to carry the chariot (body) along life's journey. The destination, as the Upanishad says, is the supreme abode of Vishnu (the all-pervading Self) – reached only when the chariot is steered rightly.

**Practical exercise (inner visualization):** Close your eyes and visualize yourself as this chariot: a **rider** (Self) being pulled by five powerful horses. See your **mind** holding the reins, and **intellect** beside it as the driver giving firm commands. If any horse tries to bolt toward a tempting pasture (say, the eye drawn to an alluring form or the tongue to a seductive taste), imagine the intellect pulling the reins via the mind, commanding “No!” The horse whinnies but obeys, staying on the road. This imagery, repeated in meditation, ingrains an inner power structure: *the Self → intellect → mind → senses*.

Indeed, **hierarchy matters**. The Bhagavad Gita (3.42) echoes this chain of command: “The senses are superior (to dull matter), the mind is superior to the senses, the intellect is superior to

the mind, and the Self is superior to the intellect.”. Knowing this, we stop behaving like an anarchic team of wild horses and remember our true status as master of the chariot. This mental framework itself curbs sensorial excess: when the “horses” realize there’s a firm charioteer and an alert rider, they become **tame and cooperative**.

In summary, **establish your inner command**. Affirm daily: “My senses are not in charge—I (Self) am. My mind is not in charge—my intelligence is, guided by my higher Self.” This clarity paves the way for the next step: actively **training** the mind and senses to obey that hierarchy.

## Technique 4: Regularly Training (“Taming”) the Mind and Senses

Having acknowledged the proper hierarchy, we must **enforce it through practice**. Untrained senses are likened to **wild horses** that will run amok if the reins are loose. Similarly, an untrained mind is often compared to a **mad monkey**—restless and mischievous. The scriptures reassure us that these can indeed be tamed with consistent practice (*abhyāsa*) and dispassion (*vairāgya*). Just as a horse-trainer gradually domesticates a wild stallion through patient, firm training, we too must *discipline our senses and mind by regular exercise of will*.

Lord Krishna acknowledges the mind’s unruliness but insists it *can* be brought under control: “*asamśayaṁ maha-bāho mano durnigrahaṁ calam; abhyāsenā tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa cha grhyate*” – “Undoubtedly, O mighty-armed (Arjuna), the mind is fickle and difficult to restrain, **but by practice and detachment it can be controlled.**” (Bhagavad Gita 6.35). The key words are **practice** and **detachment**.

**How to train the mind and senses?** We turn training into a sort of *daily game* of commands and obedience:

- **Mind Training:** Give your mind deliberate *orders* and see that it follows. For example, choose an object (a flower vase, a dot on the wall) and command your mind, “Focus on this for 30 seconds without wavering.” Hold it there by will. Then command, “Now switch and focus on that clock for 15 seconds.” Make it obey the shift. This voluntary shifting trains the mind in **both concentration and detachment** on cue. The *Katha Upanishad* says the discriminating person with a *yukta manas* (yoked, controlled mind) achieves that the senses remain under control, “like good horses under a trusted charioteer”. By **ordering your mind around** routinely, you assert the charioteer’s authority. It also builds mental muscles of attention. In modern terms, this is similar to mindfulness practices or cognitive training to increase attention span and cognitive flexibility.
- **Sense Training:** You can playfully practice restraint to build willpower. For instance, hold a tempting sweet in your hand; then **order your sense of taste**: “You shall *not* taste this now.” Watch the salivation and desire rise, and consciously *refuse* to indulge. After a few minutes, put it away. This is like doing strength reps for the “**muscle**” of **self-control**. Another exercise: while walking, deliberately *withhold* your gaze from attractive sights – stare straight ahead or at the sky, internally telling your eyes “obey me, do not stray.” These small practices accumulate inner strength. As the Bhagavad Gita observes, “One who is able to withdraw the senses from their objects at will, like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs, is firmly fixed in wisdom”.
- **Body Training:** The body, too, should heed the mind. Ancient *tapasya* (austerity) often involved holding certain postures or fasting – essentially commanding the body to endure discomfort. You can do mild versions: hold your arm out for one full minute without dropping, or take a cold shower occasionally and breathe steadily through it. These exercises send a message to the body: “*You are not the master, you are the servant.*” Over time, the body and senses learn to *wait for your command* rather than impulsively

dragging you. The Yoga Sutras state that through the fire of austerity (tapas), impurities are destroyed and **“mastery over the body and senses”** is attained. Indeed, *tapas* literally means heat; generating this inner heat of discipline “burns out” the dross of rebellious habits, yielding a clarity and lightness in the senses.

Regular taming practice also entails a mental dialogue of authority: say to the mind each day, *“You are **mine**, I am not yours. Senses, you are my instruments, I am not your slave. Obey my higher intention.”* Far from being a harsh self-treatment, this is empowering and ultimately calming. The Bhagavad Gita advises that **whenever the unsteady mind wanders, one should bring it back under the control of the Self**. Specifically: *“yato yato niścharati manaś chañchalam asthiram, tatas tato niyamyaitad ātmany eva vaśam nayet”* – “From whatever cause the restless mind wanders, one should restrain it and bring it back under the control of the Self.” (Gita 6.26). This verse encapsulates technique 4: every time the “horses” dart off-track, gently but firmly rein them in—*again and again*. Eventually, both mind and senses become **docile, well-trained steeds**, happy to trot along the path you (the intellect guided by Self) choose for them.

Think of this as **mental and sensory hygiene** – just as you brush your teeth daily, also spend a few minutes **daily “brushing” your mind** (policing stray thoughts, pulling it back to center) and **“grooming” your senses** (practicing a bit of denial or command). Over time, the inner unruliness subsides. The wild horses start to **love** their charioteer; the mad monkey of mind sits in peace on your shoulder. This sets the stage for deeper control techniques involving breath and prāṇāyāma, which we turn to next.



## Technique 5: Mastering Breath to Control Mind and Senses (Hatha Yoga Perspective)

Ancient yogic texts reveal a powerful secret: **breath (prāṇa) is the link between body, senses, and mind**, and by mastering the breath one can pacify the mind and thus restrain the senses. Hatha Yoga in particular emphasizes *prāṇāyāma* (breath regulation) as a means to conquer the “unruly mind”. The logic is summarized succinctly in *Hatha Yoga Pradīpikā* 2.2:

*“Chale vāte chalam chittam, niśchale niśchalam bhavet; yogī sthānutvam āpnoti tato vāyuni nirodhayet”*

**Translation:** “When the breath wanders (is unsteady), the mind is unsteady; when the breath is calmed, the mind becomes calm. Therefore, the yogi should restrain the breath to make the mind firm.”

This ancient verse affirms a direct **breath-mind connection**: a restless, quick, erratic breath will make the mind similarly agitated and the senses turbulent. A slow, deep, regulated breath conversely induces mental calm and sense control. Modern science agrees, noting how slow breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, reducing anxiety and improving focus. But the yogis knew this ages ago. They developed *prāṇāyāma* techniques – involving inhalation (*pūraka*), exhalation (*rechaka*), and **breath retention (kumbhaka)** – to harness this connection. Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra 2.49-50 also describes *prāṇāyāma* as regulated inhaling, exhaling and retention that stills the mind and prepares it for meditation.

The *Bhagavad Gita* too alludes to using breath-control as a spiritual practice. In chapter 4, it mentions those who “offer the outgoing breath into the incoming, and the incoming into the outgoing, stopping all breath movement – absorbed in *prāṇāyāma*”. It lauds such yogis who **tame their senses and focus their mind** via the regulation of life-force. One commentary explains: “Yogis utilize breath control to **tame the senses and bring the mind into focus**”. Simply put, mastering *prāṇa* leads to mastery of *indriyas*.

### Practical breath techniques for sense-control:

- **Rhythmic Breathing:** Adopt a gentle rhythmic pattern daily. For example, inhale for a count of 4, exhale for 4 (equalizing breath), or 4-2-4 (inhale 4 – hold 2 – exhale 4) as per your comfort. Rhythmic breathing harmonizes the pranic currents. The effect is almost immediate: the mind starts feeling centered and the cravings simmer down. Try a simple session of 10 minutes of slow breathing each morning; you’ll notice that impulsive urges are markedly quieter afterward. The Hatha yoga verse above says the yogi attains “*sthānutva*” (firmness or steadiness) by such breath restraint – meaning an unshakeable calm that sense temptations cannot disturb easily.
- **Kumbhaka (Breath Retention):** This is a powerful tool to *still the mind*. Even a short retention after inhale or exhale (for a few seconds) can profoundly quiet mental chatter. Ancient yogis discovered that *breath retention leads to “nirodha” (cessation) of the mind’s fluctuations*. In Gita 5.27, Krishna describes a meditative state of fixing life-force between the eyebrows and **balancing prāṇa and apāna** (the inward and outward

breaths) – essentially instructing a form of kumbhaka. You can practice a mild version during the day: after inhaling, hold gently for, say, 5 seconds (not straining), feeling the stillness, then exhale. Or after exhale, hold out for a few seconds. This practice, if done regularly, makes the mind accustomed to **pausing before reacting**. So if a provocative stimulus arrives, the mind that is trained in kumbhaka does not jump immediately; it has the **reflex of stillness** which gives you a window of control to choose your response.

- **Awareness of Breath (Prānasmṛti):** Simply keeping part of your attention on the breath at the nostrils or abdomen throughout daily activities works wonders. The *Hatha Yoga* texts state: “He who binds the breath can bind the mind; the breath wanders, the mind wanders”. So, by *tracking your breathing*, you indirectly tether the mind. Whenever senses try to overwhelm (e.g. you see delicious food and greed kicks in), immediately shift awareness to the cool air entering your nostrils and the warm air leaving. A few mindful breaths will cool the rush of **rāga** (craving) and restore inner poise, allowing your intellect to make a sane choice (perhaps to eat moderately, or not at all if unnecessary).

From a *Hatha Yoga* perspective, **mind is seen as a modification of prāṇa**. Control the prāṇa (breath), and like a puppeteer controlling strings, the mind and senses (which dance to the prāṇa’s tune) naturally come under control. An oft-quoted result in yoga lore is: “*Through prāṇāyāma, the mind’s restlessness is quelled, and the yogi’s senses become as obedient as a flame in a windless place.*” The Yoga Sutra (2.43) specifically notes that from intense self-discipline (tapas), one gains “*kāya-indriya-siddhi*” – perfection or mastery over the body and sense-organs. Breath-regulation is considered a form of tapas that “burns away” the impurities causing sensory waywardness.

In summary, **use your breath as a leash for the mind**. Regular prāṇāyāma (even 10–15 minutes a day of deep, slow breathing with brief retentions) will yield a calmer mind and markedly enhanced control over your senses. You will find that impulses which previously felt irresistible can now be observed with detachment and gently dismissed, as the still mind backed by balanced prāṇa calmly says, “No, thank you.” In the next part, we explore an extension of this technique from *Kriyā Yoga*: using inner sound (nāda) to control the breath, and in turn the mind and senses.

## Technique 6: KriyaYoga and the Inner Sound

In some yogic traditions (like Kriyā Yoga and certain Upanishads such as *Nāda-Bindu Upanishad*), it is taught that **focusing on the inner sound (nāda)** can automatically regulate the breath and thus still the mind, leading to sense withdrawal. The inner sound, often heard in deep meditation (a high-pitched “OM” or ringing tone within the right ear), acts as a mesmerizing hook for the mind. One text states: *“Nāda is a sharp goad to control the mind, which, like a rogue elephant, wanders in the garden of the senses. When the mind is caught by the sweet inner sound, it becomes as motionless as a bird with clipped wings.”* By immersing awareness in this subtle inner vibration, the breath automatically becomes ultra-fine and slow (sometimes stopping of its own accord in kumbhaka), and the mind drops into profound stillness. This leads to effortless pratyāhāra – the senses drawn inward. The *Hatha Yoga Pradīpikā* (4.79–82) confirms that through *nādānusandhāna* (inner sound meditation), **one’s awareness of external sense-objects diminishes and the mind attains one-pointed absorption (laya)**. Thus Kriyā Yoga advocates incorporating sound or *mantra* meditation to aid breath and mind control.

For a practitioner, this means along with breath-focus, you might hum “OM” or listen to the inner tone during meditation. According to yogic experiences: *“When the mind is absorbed in nāda, it abandons its fickle nature. Bound to the sweetness of this divine sound, it no longer craves sensory pleasures.”* In Kriyā Yoga, one often controls prāṇa via specific energetic techniques (like spinal breathing etc.) and then listens to nāda, thereby achieving a state where **breath becomes very calm, mind becomes calm, and senses naturally withdraw**. It’s an advanced adjunct method – the foundation of breath control remains primary, but inner sound can supercharge the process. The key takeaway is that *any* deeper object of internal focus (be it the breath, a mantra, or inner sound) can serve as a higher anchor that stills the breath and mind, facilitating sense restraint.

## Technique 7: Continuous (Divided) Focus – Keeping the Mind Always Occupied on a Focal Point

An empty mind is the devil’s workshop, they say – and in terms of sense control, a *wandering, idle mind* is easily snared by sense objects. The solution is to **keep the mind gently focused at all times**. Even during everyday tasks, one part of the attention can rest on an *inner object* (like the breath, a mantra, or the center of consciousness in the heart/head). This is akin to maintaining a pilot light of concentration that never extinguishes. By doing so, the senses remain under check because the mind isn’t fully available to chase sensory temptations. This technique could be called “*perpetual partial attention*” for a spiritual purpose.

Why is this effective? Imagine you have 100% mental bandwidth. If you allocate, say, 20% of it to continuously observing your breath or a chosen focal point, only 80% remains for external tasks and stimuli. That 20% acts as a **reservoir of steadiness**, a buffer against total extroversion. The senses, trying to pull the mind outward to various objects, find that the mind is already engaged elsewhere. **Distraction finds less space to take root**. Over time, one can increase this inward focus to perhaps 30-40% while still functioning normally in the world. This is an advanced form of mindfulness in action.

Lord Krishna hints at this in the Gita when he instructs Arjuna: “*tasmat sarveṣu kālēṣu mām anusmara yudhya ca*” – “Therefore, at all times remember Me (the Divine) and fight (do your duty)”. This means one portion of the mind should constantly remember the divine (internal focus) even as the rest engages in battle (external duties). “*Mayy arpita-mano-buddhiḥ*” – “with mind and intellect surrendered to Me” – such a person, He says, achieves union with the Divine. This divided-yet-focused mind is a hallmark of Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga practice, where one works in the world but keeps an inner chant of God’s name or a feeling of connection always running.

### Practical steps for continuous focus:

- **Choose Your Focal Point:** It could be the sensation of your breath at the nostrils, the repetition of a mantra like “Om̐” internally, a visualized divine symbol (like a flame in the heart or an image of your deity), or even just the feeling of awareness itself witnessing all. Ensure it’s something you find soothing and can easily revisit attention to.
- **Practice During Simple Activities:** Start with routine tasks – walking, cleaning, driving (with eyes open of course) – and try to keep awareness of your chosen point. For example, while walking to work, silently chant “Om̐” in sync with your steps and keep a portion of attention on the sound. Or if sitting at your desk, keep a subtle awareness of the coolness of air in your nostrils.
- **Deal with Interruptions:** In the beginning, you’ll often forget the focal point when things get busy. That’s okay – as soon as you remember, gently bring it back. This is the “*yato yato*” principle from Gita 6.26 again: *wherever the mind wanders, bring it back to the focus*. Treat external stimuli like someone trying to interrupt a phone call – you might attend briefly, but you keep *the call on hold* and return to it ASAP. Here, your call is with the inner object.

- **Partial Attention vs. Full Attention:** Note that we are not suggesting you do everything absent-mindedly. Rather, **train a dual-awareness:** one thread on the inner anchor, another on the task at hand. At first, it may feel like juggling, but with practice it becomes one integrated state of being present yet inwardly collected. Advanced practitioners report that this actually *enhances* performance in tasks, because the inner calm improves clarity and efficiency.

One classic example is the warrior Arjuna himself: tradition says even in the midst of war, a part of him was in yoga (union) with Krishna. Many saints (like the 19th-century saint Tukaram) wrote that while farming their field or doing business, internally they were singing God's name constantly. This gave them "*dwividha drishti*" – a double vision – to navigate the world without getting lost in it.

The immediate benefit of continuous inner focus is **automatic sense withdrawal**. When your mind is engaged on a subtle object, the senses default to "*standby mode*." They might register external information, but they don't greedily latch onto it. It's like a child whose attention is absorbed in an interesting toy; even if sweets are offered around, the child might not notice. Here your mind is the child, the inner focus is the toy, and sensory lures become background noise. As the Gita advises: "*tāni sarvāṇi samyamya... mat-parah*" – restraining all the senses, keep the mind on a higher goal (Me, the Supreme), thus one's wisdom stays steady.

Modern life offers plenty of chances to practice this: try focusing on breath while scrolling through emails (you'll check them more calmly), or repeat a mantra in your mind while commuting in a noisy subway (the mantra protects your mind from absorbing the chaos). Over weeks, you'll notice a new stability – a feeling of **inner center** that remains undisturbed, come what may. That center is like an observer that watches urges rise and fall without getting swept away.

To avoid misunderstanding: this divided focus should not be so overpowering that you become oblivious to important tasks or conversations. It's a *subtle undercurrent*, not a full-on meditation (except in designated practice times). Think of it as maintaining an "inner smile" or an "inner song" all day. Outwardly you function perfectly normally, but inwardly you hum along in tune with your chosen point. If something requires your full conscious attention (say a complex calculation or an emergency), you can drop the inner focus momentarily and use 100% mind, then resume the background focus when possible. Over time, though, you may find you can handle even complex tasks while a gentle awareness of Self or breath continues – the mind has great capacity once trained.

In essence, **never let the mind sit idle** in cravings. Give it wholesome work always. Like a diligent gatekeeper, it should be ever watchful. This permanent (even if partial) attention is the antidote to the inattentiveness through which sneaky sense desires infiltrate. It cultivates an alert, contented mind state that is described as "*sva-stha*" (established in the Self). In that state, as one yogic text puts it, *the senses are automatically absorbed or dissolved into the mind, the mind into the intellect, and the intellect into the witnessing Self* – a spontaneous pratyāhāra occurs.

## Technique 8: Regular Deep Breaths and Kumbhaka Throughout the Day

This technique builds on the earlier prāṇāyāma discussion, emphasizing **frequency and rhythm**: by taking *mini breathing breaks* during the day – involving deep, rhythmic breaths and occasional breath-holds – we continually reset the mind and maintain sense control.

Ancient yogis did not confine prāṇāyāma to morning practice alone; they often remained mindful of their breathing patterns at all times. The Hatha Yoga texts say that in a perfected yogi, **the breath naturally becomes slow and subtle all day**, reflecting the peaceful mind. For us, we can simulate that effect by intentionally inserting moments of **slow, conscious breathing** in our routine.

**Why is this effective?** Because stress, anger, lust, and excitement all correlate with certain erratic breathing patterns (fast, shallow, irregular). By *proactively* breathing slowly and deeply, we prevent those agitations from taking hold. It's like keeping the ocean of the breath calm, so no storm can easily form on its surface (the mind).

The practice is simple: **several times a day**, pause for 1–2 minutes to do the following: inhale deeply through the nose, let the belly expand; *hold the breath comfortably for a moment (kumbhaka)*; then exhale slowly, feeling tensions melt. Even 3–5 such breaths can shift your nervous system from “fight-or-flight” to “rest-and-digest.” The mind follows suit, dropping its racing thoughts. The senses, which were perhaps overstimulated by the morning rush or a tense meeting, suddenly find themselves in a tranquil environment and naturally withdraw their frantic activity.

Scriptural backing for this comes, for instance, from the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, where the sage Vasiṣṭha advises Lord Rama: “*O Raghava, roam the world externally performing your duties diligently, but internally practice seeing yourself as non-doer*”. In that verse, he recommends using the regulation of breath and mind together to achieve this non-doership. The Bhagavad Gita (4.29) also explicitly mentions yogis who “check the flow of inhalation and exhalation” as performing a sacred sacrifice. It calls such breath-regulators “*prāṇāyāma-parāyaṇāḥ*” – devoted to breath control – and notes that **all of these practices help burn away impurities** and subdue the senses. Furthermore, Gita 5.27 describes a meditative breath regulation: “**Restraining the vāyus (breaths) moving through the nostrils, the yogi controls mind and senses**”. By doing mini-prāṇāyāma throughout the day, we approximate that state even in the midst of worldly tasks.

### How to incorporate rhythmic deep breaths:

- **Link it to Triggers:** For instance, each time you finish a task or before you switch to a new one, take a couple of deep breaths as described. Or use natural breaks: waiting at a red light, after sending an email, upon entering your car or home, etc. Instead of letting the mind idle or wander during those moments, consciously breathe.

- **Use Reminders:** You might set a silent alert on your phone every hour that simply reminds “Breathe”. When it buzzes, you inhale, hold, exhale a few times. Over time, it becomes second nature.
- **Kumbhaka Caution:** When holding the breath, **do not strain**. Even 2-3 seconds of pause after inhale or exhale can have effect. With practice you might gently extend it to 5-8 seconds, but always remain within comfort. The idea is a brief stilling, not an oxygen deprivation contest! A comfortable kumbhaka is *quieting*; an uncomfortable one will be counterproductive.

The immediate payoff of these micro-prāṇāyāmas is a **reset** of your mental state. Any budding sensory craving often dissipates in the face of a conscious deep breath. For example, say you’re working and suddenly feel the impulse to check social media or grab an unnecessary snack (a sense distraction). Instead, lean back, inhale slowly... hold... exhale. Do this a couple times, and the urge often passes or at least weakens, because you have flooded your system with prāṇa and calm, regaining sovereignty.

By the end of a day where you’ve interwoven many such breaths, you’ll notice significantly less accumulated stress or restless desire. Each conscious breath is like cleaning dust off the mind before it thickens. It also keeps the “flame” of awareness alive as discussed in Technique 6. Many traditions speak of **breath as the carrier of mind** – if you continuously keep the breath regulated, the mind never strays far.

In essence, **make deep, rhythmic breathing a habit**. Think of it as sipping water throughout the day to stay hydrated – here you are “prāṇa-hydrating” your system to keep it balanced. The senses then are like lotuses resting on calm water – they remain open but *unperturbed*. And whenever needed, you can close them at will without resistance.



## Technique 9: Using Viveka (Intellect/Discrimination) Through Inner Dialogue

Our next technique shifts focus to the **power of intellect and self-reflection**. *Viveka* means the faculty of discrimination – the ability to discern the real from the illusory, the lasting from the fleeting, the beneficial from the harmful. The suggestion here is to actively apply viveka whenever a sense-desire or emotion threatens to derail you: essentially, **talk to yourself (or to the desire) with reason and insight**. By engaging in an *inner dialogue*, you illuminate the mind with wisdom, thereby weakening and ultimately transforming the raw impulse.

This method is well attested in Vedantic texts. *Vivekachūḍāmaṇi* (“Crest-Jewel of Discrimination”), attributed to Adi Shankaracharya, emphasizes cultivating viveka and its allied virtue *vairāgya* (dispassion) as fundamental to liberation. It even defines dispassion as a constant perception of the defects of sensory pleasures and a detachment from them. Likewise, *Bhaja Govindam* urges, “Reflect again and again (*manasi vichintaya*) that the pleasures of the flesh are but modifications of flesh – do not get deluded” (verse: “*nārī-stana-bhara-nābhīdeśaṁ dṛṣtvā māgā mohāveśam... etan māṁsa-vaśādi-vikāraṁ manasi vicintaya vāram vāram*”). This is literally advising an inner talk: “*O mind, think again and again – what you are lusting after is just flesh and fat. Don’t be fooled!*” Such reasoning is a form of *viveka-practice*.

**How to practice viveka through inner dialogue:** When a **lustful thought or any sensory craving** arises, do the following mentally (or even whisper to yourself if alone):

1. **Acknowledge the Part:** First, recognize the part of your mind generating the desire. For example, say, “I see you, O desire for sweets” or “Hello lustful impulse.” By naming it, you separate *you* (the witness) from the impulse. This itself diminishes its power. The Bhagavad Gita (3.40) notes that desire lurks in the senses and mind; here *you* (the higher self) are addressing it as something distinct.
2. **Inquire its Need:** Gently ask, “What do you really want? What do you seek, O mind, from this sensory pleasure?” Often the answer might be “*happiness*” or “*stimulation*” or “*comfort*”. Now use *viveka*: **Is this true happiness?** Remind the mind of the **consequences of indulgence**. For instance, “If I indulge this lust, it may give momentary pleasure, but it will lead to attachment; unfulfilled attachment will lead to pain and agitation. Is it worth that?” This echoes the Gita’s warning: “That pleasure which comes from sense contact is indeed *a womb of suffering*, for it has a beginning and an end”. Tell your mind this truth: *sensory thrills are fleeting and often followed by vexation*.
3. **Present a Higher Alternative:** After disarming the lower desire with understanding, **offer the mind a better pursuit**. Like a parent distracting a child from a knife by offering a toy, give your mind something higher: “Instead of scrolling on the phone (seeking entertainment), why not read that inspiring article or play some music or take a nature walk? That will be more fulfilling.” Or, “Rather than fantasizing lustfully, let’s channel that energy into exercise or creative work, which gives joy and pride without regret.” If the mind craves intimacy, maybe direct it to loving devotional sentiment for God or deep friendship – *a higher octave of love*. The idea is to *negotiate* with the mind,

showing it it can get what it truly needs (satisfaction, love, excitement) in ways that don't enslave it to the senses.

This method essentially treats your psyche as having sub-personalities or conflicting voices, which you harmonize through conversation. Intriguingly, **modern psychology mirrors this approach** in techniques like *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)* (disputing irrational impulses with rational thoughts) and in *Internal Family Systems (IFS)* or Jung's *Active Imagination*, where you dialogue with parts of yourself (the inner child, the shadow, etc.) to integrate them. Carl Jung indeed practiced conversing with figures in his psyche (e.g. his anima, shadow, wise guide) to resolve inner conflicts. He found that giving those submerged desires a voice and then guiding them with wisdom leads to psychological wholeness. This is exactly what we do with viveka dialogue: *invite the troublesome desire into a council with your higher wisdom.*

Jung said these inner figures are “*real*” in their impact and must be acknowledged. In our context, lust or greed is like an inner figure – perhaps a “lower self” yearning for gratification. We don't merely suppress it; we engage it with empathy and clarity. Over time, this inner conversation **aligns all parts of the mind to the higher goal**. The conflicted fragmentation (one part wants restraint, another part wants indulgence) dissolves. Psychologically, this reduces inner dissonance and stress. Spiritually, it means your *buddhi* (intellect) enlightens the *manas* (mind) consistently, resulting in an integrated will. The *Katha Upanishad* declares when the intellect is firm and mind is well-reined, one's journey reaches the supreme Good.

**Example inner dialogue:** Suppose a lustful image appears in your mind. Immediately, *buddhi* addresses *manas*: “O mind, I know you're excited by that image. But recall the teachings: ‘*dhyāyato viṣayān puṁsaḥ saṅgas teṣūpajāyate... kāmāt krodho 'bhijāyate*’ – dwelling on sense objects gives attachment, from attachment springs desire, and from (thwarted) desire comes anger, then delusion, then downfall (Gita 2.62-63). Do you want to fall into that chain?”. The mind might say, “But it feels good!” The intellect replies, “Only *while* indulging. After that, it leaves emptiness or craving for repetition. It's not **true** happiness, which is independent of external kicks. Remember how restless you felt last time after indulging? That's *duḥkha* (sorrow) in disguise.” (You remind it of past experiences – learning from experience is viveka). Then strengthen resolve: “You (mind) deserve better – a joy that doesn't crash after a high. Why not instead do 10 pushups or go for a brisk walk to channel this energy? Or chant a mantra and feel that bliss that outlasts the moment.” Perhaps you even pray, “Dear God, grant me the higher joy so this lower craving pales.” In this way, within a minute or two of inner reasoning, the lust wave passes, and the mind actually feels *prouder and lighter* for having chosen wisely. **This is viveka in action.**

Each time you win such an inner argument, you **strengthen the intellect's authority** over the mind's mischief. Scriptures say the intellect is the charioteer that must not fall asleep at the reins. Viveka is like the charioteer's discernment shouting “No!” or “Left turn!” at the right moments to avoid accidents. As you practice, the mind starts internalizing these reasonings so that eventually the *dialogue becomes a monologue* – the lower voice quiets down and the higher understanding prevails mostly.

Moreover, by constant reminder of impermanence and higher purpose, you cultivate **vairāgya (dispassion)** spontaneously. *Vairāgya* is essentially the fruit of repeated viveka. For instance, mentally telling yourself daily, “*All these sensual pleasures are not worth the trouble; they come and go, but bring bondage. My true happiness lies in the Self, which is of the nature of bliss (ānanda) and does not depend on external things.*” Such reflection is advised by sages. *Vivekachūḍāmaṇi* urges seekers to repeat to themselves the discernment that *Brahman alone is real, the world of sensory experience is fleeting*. When lust or anger arises, scripture suggests we question: “*Who am I? Am I this petty emotion, or am I the witness beyond it?*” By asserting “I am not the mind or senses, I am the pure consciousness (śuddha chaitanya) untouched by their play,” you perform *ātma-vichāra* (Self-inquiry) which immediately creates a gap between you and the storm of feeling. This is another form of viveka dialogue – reminding yourself of your true identity versus the transient identification that is causing distress.

In summary, **use your intellect like a wise counselor to negotiate with your unruly inner child (the desirous mind)**. Do it regularly, even proactively. Don’t wait for a huge meltdown; have these friendly debates even with mild urges or when observing others. This constant use of viveka keeps the intellect sharp and the mind in check. Over time, the mind becomes “*mano-nigraha-samartham*” – capable of restraining itself, imbued with the wisdom you’ve taught it.

As a final touch, integrate divine support as well (which leads to the next techniques): You can include God or guru in your inner talk. “*O Lord, this mind is wavering – help me see clearly.*” Or imagine your guru asking you, “*Will this indulgence help you on the path?*” – your honest answer itself may deter the wrong action. In *Carl Jung’s Red Book* methodology, Jung often dialogued with figures that represented a higher wisdom (like Philemon, his inner guide). We too have an inner voice of conscience, or the voice of Śāstra/Guru inside – give it a chance to speak during these dialogues. That higher voice can lovingly chastise the errant mind and steer it right.

Through **viveka and inner dialogue**, you cultivate a habit of *rational self-talk* and *mindful confrontation of desires*. Instead of suppressing or being swept away, you face the urge with eyes open, analyze it, educate it, and elevate it. This transforms your relationship with your mind from one of fear or brute force to one of understanding and leadership. The mind becomes your friend (“*bandhur ātmā ātmanas tasya*” – “the mind is the friend of the Self for one who has conquered it,” Gita 6.6), and together you journey toward higher fulfillment, freed from the tyranny of compulsive sense-chasing.

## Technique 10: Cultivating Vairāgya (Detachment/Dispassion) Daily

While viveka is the *active* discernment in the moment, **vairāgya** is the *steady underlying attitude of detachment* that one develops toward sense pleasures. It is like a general **disinterest in sensual indulgence**, born from understanding their futility and from tasting higher joy. The scriptures time and again extol *vairāgya* as crucial for self-mastery. *Vairāgya* doesn't mean dislike of the world; it means not being *enslaved* by attraction or aversion. It is a peaceful *indifference* – enjoying what comes without craving more, and not lamenting what doesn't come. This frees enormous mental energy and grants a kind of invulnerability: the senses can dangle their objects, but one remains “**above**” them, preferring the bliss of the Self.

How to cultivate vairāgya? **Regular reflection** on the *transience and insufficiency of sensual pleasures* is a classic method. The mind needs constant reminders, because the world's glamour is persistent. One effective practice is a *daily mental review* of the **defects (doṣha) of indulgence** and the **benefits of restraint**:

- Remind yourself: “*Sensory pleasures are fleeting and momentary (kṣaṇika). They appear sweet at first but often end in bitterness or boredom. Chasing them is like chasing a mirage.*” The Gita observes that contact-born pleasures have a beginning and an end and thus the wise do not delight in them. Also recall, “*Ye hi saṁsparśa-jā bhogā duḥkha-yaṇaya eva te*” – “Indeed, sense-enjoyments are wombs of sorrow” (Bhagavad Gita 5.22). This stark phrase “wombs of sorrow” can be memorized and brought to mind whenever you find yourself daydreaming about some indulgence. It will pour cold water on the hallucination of permanent happiness from that object.
- Visualize the *after-effects*: If tempted by, say, an alcoholic binge, envision the hangover and regret the next day. If by lust, envision the possible entanglements or the emptiness that follows gratification. **Play the movie to the end**, not just the exciting trailer. This helps the mind *experience the consequences in advance*, diminishing the charm.
- Contrast with spiritual bliss: Affirm that “*Only the bliss of realization/enduring virtues is true bliss (ānanda). Everything else comes and goes.*” The Upanishads define the nature of the Self/Brahman as *sat-chit-ānanda* – immortal existence, consciousness, and bliss absolute. Remind yourself that *this* bliss is steady and does not depend on outer circumstances. It is accessed by turning within, not by collecting outer experiences. Say, “*Why settle for candy happiness when I own the honey of divine bliss inside?*” This is not just theory – even a little taste of inner peace in meditation can fuel your conviction that *a quiet mind feels better than any excess*. Each morning, perhaps after meditation, resolve: “*May I not run after ephemeral pleasures today; may I remain centered in the joy of the Self.*”
- Use **negative visualization** (a Stoic technique) to appreciate what you have without clinging: e.g., think, “*One day I will die and leave all this behind. These possessions and sensual thrills aren't truly mine.*” This is not to become morbid, but to cultivate *release*. Vairāgya often arises strongly when we realize the body itself is temporary. “*I am not the body, I am the witnessing consciousness,*” as Vedanta teaches. If I am not the body, then the body's cravings are not *my* cravings. They are like a machine's signals that I

(consciousness) can observe without identifying. This perspective automatically detaches the sense of self from sense urges.

The **Sanskrit scriptures provide numerous detachment epithets** and metaphors. One famous subhāṣita (wise saying) is: “*yadā sat tatra na rāgaḥ, yadi rāgaḥ tatra na sat*” – “Where there is Truth (the Eternal), there can be no attachment; where there is attachment, there is no sight of Truth.” Therefore, the aspirant of Truth deliberately reduces attachment to make space for realizing the Eternal. Adi Shankara in *Vivekachūḍāmaṇi* describes vairāgya as “*Thāmutrārtha-phala-bhoga-virāgaḥ*” – a dispassion for the enjoyments of this world and even of heaven, from repeatedly observing their defects. King Yayati in the Mahabharata, after living a thousand years in indulgence, famously said: “*Desire is never satisfied by enjoyment, just as fire is never quenched by pouring butter into it.*” This sentiment is mirrored in *Śhrīmad Bhāgavatam* 9.19.14 (as quoted earlier). Repeating such verses to oneself (even in translation) steels the mind.

### **Daily practices for detachment:**

- **Morning Resolution:** On waking, affirm a simple mantra like: “*I am a guest in this world; I will enjoy what comes but remain unattached. My goal is the eternal Self, not fleeting thrills.*” Offer the day to God, thinking, “*Whatever I get today – success or failure, pleasure or pain – I accept as prasād (grace).*” This attitude, taught in Karma Yoga, preempts a lot of disappointment and attachment. When you aren’t hungry for particular outcomes, senses have less bait to trap you with.
- **Neti-Neti in Action:** As you encounter experiences, silently practice **neti-neti** (“not this, not that”) for those that try to stick. Ate a delicious meal? Enjoy the taste fully, then say internally, “*Neti – not this; the joy is ultimately not in the food.*” Saw a beautiful person? Appreciate respectfully, then “*neti – not this; outer beauty is transient, the true beauty is the Self inside.*” This doesn’t make you cold; it makes you wise in enjoyment. You honor the divine essence more than the form. Over time, this preserves your heart from unhealthy attachments while still allowing you to participate in life’s play. The *Bṛhadāranyaka Upanishad* repeatedly uses neti-neti to negate all not-Self, helping the seeker rest in the pure Self beyond phenomena. In daily life, neti-neti can be a gentle background thought that anything perceived or felt is not the ultimate truth, thus keeping you inwardly unattached.
- **Contemplate Sat-Chit-Ānanda:** At least once a day, meditate on your true identity. “*I am not the body, not the senses, not the mind, not the intellect; I am the witnessing consciousness, unchanging awareness, a fragment of Brahman whose nature is bliss.*” There are beautiful Sanskrit affirmations like the *Ātma-Śhatkam* (Nirvāṇa-Śhatkam) by Shankaracharya: “*Mano-buddhy-ahankāra chittāni nāham... Chidānanda-rūpaḥ Śhivo ’ham Śhivo ’ham*” – “I am not the mind, intellect, ego or memory... I am of the nature of Consciousness and Bliss; I am Shiva (pure auspicious Self).” Repeating such verses instills a deep detachment from the not-self (all that is not you truly) and revelry in the Self. When firmly established in the understanding “*I am sat-chit-ānanda*”, chasing little sense pleasures seems as trivial as a king worrying about a lost penny. Why would the ocean crave a drop of water? Similarly, if you identify as the ocean of Brahman’s bliss, sensory pleasures are but drops – nice, but inconsequential.

One caveat: **Detachment does not mean neglecting duties or becoming emotionless.** You can love your family, do your job diligently, and even enjoy art, food, or nature – *but without moha* (delusion) that these define you or are the source of lasting fulfillment. The Gita encourages enjoying *sāttvic pleasures* in moderation and with gratitude, but with an understanding of their place. It says such pleasure “which leads to the purification of one’s being” is in the mode of goodness (sattva). For example, enjoying a healthy meal or uplifting music can be sattvic and helpful – but even then, one remains aware: “*This is a gift of God; if it’s there, wonderful, if not, I’m still content.*” That is vairāgya in practice: **preferring the inner contentment to outer excitements.**

As you regularly remind yourself of the *transitory nature of sensual life and the superior joy of spiritual life*, you’ll find that the **grip of cravings loosens**. Situations that used to hook you will start feeling almost childish. You might internally chuckle when offered some temptation, thinking, “*Been there, done that, it’s not what I seek now.*” The *Bhaja Govindam* verse we cited earlier (sat-sangatve nissangatvam... nirmohatve nishchala-tattvam) shows the progression: good company → detachment → freedom from delusion → abiding in truth. By practicing viveka and detachment, you are in effect keeping the “*company*” of wise thoughts, which leads to the *nissangatva* (non-attachment) and *nirmohatva* (freedom from illusion) described.

Finally, remember that **divine grace** plays a role too. True vairāgya is described as a blessing that dawns after much merit. Pray for it: “O Lord, grant me detachment from ephemeral joys and unwavering devotion to You.” The last technique (Ishwarapranidhana) will delve into reliance on God’s grace. But even prayer itself is an act of detachment – it implies you’re not clinging to your own abilities or the world’s promises, you’re reaching for the Eternal. That attitude invites an influx of spiritual strength that makes detachment blossom naturally, even joyously. For **when detachment matures, it is not dry or bitter** – it’s coupled with an intense inner sweetness and love for God/Truth that *far surpasses* the taste of any ice cream or sensual thrill. As one saint said, “I drunk the wine of God’s love, and now the world’s cheapest wine (sensual pleasure) tastes like vinegar.”

Thus, through constant practice of *viveka* and *vairāgya*, you progressively immunize yourself against the tyranny of senses. You live in the world but are not *of* the world, to borrow a Biblical phrase. The senses, once your masters, become your comrades or servants, still functioning but no longer dragging you. This sets a perfect stage for deeper practices like **mindfulness and self-identification with the purusha (Witness)**, which we address next.

## Technique 11: Mindfulness Meditation and Self-Identification as the Witness (Puruṣha)

One fundamental reason we struggle to control thoughts, emotions, and senses is mistaken identity: we *identify* ourselves with these very thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations. If “I am angry” or “I am lustful” – then how can *I* control myself? The controller and the controlled have been muddled into one! The trick that great sages discovered is to cultivate a stance of **mindfulness and self-awareness** where you realize: “*I am not the body, not the mind; I am the witness consciousness observing them.*” This creates a subject-object separation internally: *you, the observer (subject) vs. the mind-body, the observed (object)*. The moment this separation is experienced, a **tremendous freedom** arises – because now you have a stable platform (the witnessing Self) from which to influence and direct the mind-body (the changing phenomena).

This approach has two aspects: (a) **mindfulness (smṛti or sati)** – nonjudgmental present-moment awareness of whatever is happening (thoughts, feelings, sensory inputs) as passing phenomena, and (b) “**neti-neti**” **discernment** – actively reminding oneself that “I am not this, I am not that” (not any particular thought or sensation), which leads to identification with the pure awareness behind all phenomena. Both aspects work hand-in-hand to dis-identify from the turbulent mind and senses and root oneself in the *puruṣha* (the inner witness, as Sāṃkhya/Yoga call it) or *ātman* (true Self, as Vedānta calls it).

The Buddha’s enlightenment was achieved, in large part, through **mindfulness (vipassanā)** – observing the arising and passing of all experiences to see their impermanence and non-self nature. He then taught that by **consistently observing** one’s sensations, feelings, thoughts with detachment (not reacting with craving or aversion), one could eradicate the bonds of desire. This is similar to the *Upanishadic* idea that when one sees the body-mind as *not Self*, one ceases to be controlled by it. The *Kaṭha Upanishad* we cited earlier said most people look outward and not within, but the wise turns the gaze inward. What does he see when turning inward? Initially, he sees the parade of thoughts, emotions, etc. – but crucially he sees them as separate from the *seer*. Finally, in deep meditation, when thoughts subside, he abides as the pure seer – “*puruṣha sthā*” – which is described as **still, eternal, and full of bliss**.

Let’s break down how to practice this in daily life:

**Mindfulness practice:** Allocate a few minutes (even 5–10) each morning (and if possible at intervals in the day) to sit quietly and just *watch* whatever is happening *inside* you. This is *open awareness* – not concentrating on one thing (as in breath focus earlier) but simply witnessing the flow of experience. Notice the thoughts that pop up, the emotions or body sensations. Importantly, practice **non-attachment** to them: like clouds passing in the sky of your awareness. If a thought “I want to eat pastry” arises, you label it in your mind gently: “thought about pastry”, and let it go. If a feeling of anxiety arises, note: “feeling of anxiety in chest”, and watch it. You do *not* immediately identify (“I am anxious”) or act on it; you observe, *with curiosity and equanimity*. This is the classic mindfulness approach found in *Vipassanā meditation* and described in texts like the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.



While doing this, you may naturally start noticing that **there is an observer of these experiences** – a silent witness that is *you, at the deepest level*. “*Thoughts are there, but I am not those thoughts. They come to me and leave. Feelings surge, but I remain the one who knows them.*” This intuitive insight is very powerful. It’s basically *Sāṃkhya*’s teaching: the *puruṣha* (knower) is separate from *prakṛti* (all observed phenomena, including mind). *Yoga Sūtras* 1.3 says: “*Tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe ’vasthānam*” – “Then (when mind is stilled) the Seer abides in its own nature.” And 1.4: “*Vṛtti-sārūpyam itaratra*” – “Otherwise, (the Self) identifies with the mental modifications.” Through mindfulness, we break this identification. As one teacher put it, “*Don’t say I am angry. Say I am observing anger in me. Then see what happens to the anger.*” Almost always, the moment you observe an emotion, it begins to lose intensity – because part of the mind that was fueling it has shifted to being a neutral watcher. This is the magical cooling effect of mindfulness: *observing a thought or feeling without feeding it causes it to wither or pass like a cloud*. You realize new thoughts and feelings constantly replace the old – a flow where *you, the witness, are the only constant presence*. That constant presence is your true Self, **nirguna brahman** (the Self beyond attributes) in Vedānta terms, or the *sakshi chaitanya* (witness consciousness). The Upanishads say: “*Atman is the witness of the mind, the mind cannot grasp Atman*”. This Atman/witness is *nirvikāra* (unchanging); thoughts and sensations are *savikāra* (changing). By aligning with the unchanging, you naturally detach from the changing.

**Neti-Neti (Not this, not that):** You can augment pure mindfulness with a gentle practice of *neti-neti*. As you witness phenomena, *disidentify* verbally: “This thought is not me. This sensation is not me. I am the observer, not the observed.” For example, if a painful memory arises, say: “*This is a memory arising in the mind; I am not the mind, I am the witness of the mind. Neti, neti.*” This practice comes from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* (4.4.12) where Yājñavalkya instructs that the ultimate truth is realized by negating all identification: “*Neti, neti – not this, not this – for there is nothing that can truly describe the Self, which is beyond all attributes.*” Applied in meditation, *neti-neti* helps peel away layers: body – not me; senses – not me; thoughts – not me; emotions – not me; intellect – not me. What’s left? *Pure awareness*. When abiding as that even for a flash, one experiences a taste of what the sages call “*ānanda*” (bliss) – because in that state, you are free from all agitation and lack. You realize “*I am full, whole, untouched by the play of prakṛti.*” This is often accompanied by a profound peace and subtle joy that far eclipses sense pleasures (which are trivial and agitating by comparison). Having once tasted this inner stillness-bliss, *vairāgya* becomes even more effortless (as technique 9 indicated). One realizes: “*Why would I trade this serenity for a mess of pottage (fleeting worldly thrill)?*”

**Effect on sense control:** When you establish yourself as *draṣṭā* (the witness), even if only partially, you notice that **thoughts and cravings lose their grip**. It’s almost like you’ve stepped out of a storm into a calm shelter. The bodily urges, the mental compulsions – they are seen as *happening in the body-mind*, not to the true *you*. Thus, if previously a craving would translate to “I want this now!”, now it’s experienced as “There is a craving arising in the mind... interesting.” This distance gives you the *choice* to not act on it. **You, the witness, have no craving** – the craving was of the mind. And you are learning that *you are not the mind*. This is why identification is so crucial: *identified, you had no choice; disidentified, you have freedom*. As Sri Ramana Maharshi said, “*Detachment is not clinging to what is not the Self.*”

Another aspect is that by practicing open awareness, you prevent suppression. Thoughts and feelings are *allowed* to arise and pass without judgment. This means you're not fighting or repressing (which often backfires, causing subconscious rebellions). You're simply *observing and letting go*. This is a very healthy way to handle even "bad" or taboo thoughts – rather than feeling guilty and sweeping them under, you shine awareness on them and they dissolve. This aligns all parts of you because nothing is banished to the unconscious to sabotage you later. (This ties in with Jung's idea: acknowledging and dialoguing with inner images reduces inner contradictions.)

**Mindfulness in daily life:** Outside of formal meditation, you can carry a mindful attitude throughout the day. This is similar to Technique 6's continuous focus, but here it's *open monitoring* instead of focus on one object. It means being the watcher of your actions and thoughts in real-time. For instance, while talking, a part of you watches your own words and feelings. If an emotion flares, you know "*Anger is rising in me*" even as you experience it, which gives you a chance to take a breath and respond calmly instead of blindly. If you're eating, you fully taste and also observe "*the sensation of taste is perceived by me, the witness.*" This presence is what the Buddha called *appamāda* (heedfulness) – a constant gentle vigilance. It doesn't make you cold; in fact you may enjoy experiences more fully because you are *truly present* without clinging. But simultaneously, you are not getting lost in them.

One should note, **concentration and mindfulness are complementary**. *Dharana* (concentration on breath, mantra, etc.) stills the mind, which helps with *pratyāhāra*. *Mindfulness (smṛti)* trains non-attachment by insight, which also helps *pratyāhāra*. They can be practiced separately or together. A common approach (used in many traditions) is: do a bit of concentration (like breath focus) to calm and gather the mind, then switch to open mindfulness to observe whatever arises from that calmer state. This combines the benefits – concentration gives stability, mindfulness gives insight (*viveka-khyāti* – discriminative insight in Yoga Sūtras terms).

With mindfulness and *neti-neti*, one "*centers in puruṣa (witnessing consciousness) which is always still and unwavering, and differentiates it from prakṛti (thoughts, emotions, body states) which are wavering.*" This is exactly the classical Sāṃkhya-Yoga realization. The culmination of this practice is what Patañjali calls *kaivalya* (isolation/liberation of the Seer) and Vedānta calls *nirvikalpa samādhi* (absorption in the attributeless Self). In that deepest *samādhi*, the distinction between *nirguṇa* (formless consciousness) and *saguṇa* (all forms) dissolves into unity ( "*Shiva and Shakti are one*" in Tantra, or "*Brahman alone is real*" in Advaita). But until one reaches that apex, it's practical to use the working distinction: *I am puruṣa, not prakṛti*. This empowers control: "*I am apart from the modifications of mind and body, therefore I can guide them.*" If identified, *there was no controller separate from them, hence no control was possible*. The moment disidentified, the *true "I"* stands free and can master the instruments.

Even outside of meditation, periodically just sit back in your mind and affirm, "*I am the witness, watching this body do, watching this mind think.*" This inner posture immediately gives a sense of space and calm. It's almost magical – try it when stressed: say to yourself, "*I am not this stress, I am the witness of it.*" You may feel an almost physical unburdening, as if you were carrying something that you put down. That *something* was identification.

To conclude this technique: By **witnessing and disidentifying**, you *stop feeding mental modifications*, so they slow down and the mind becomes naturally tranquil (*nirodhah*). And when it is tranquil, “*the Seer rests in its own nature*” (Yoga Sutra 1.3) – one experiences one’s Self, which is full of peace and bliss. The senses at this point are automatically in deep check; in fact, in the highest meditation (*samādhi*), the senses withdraw entirely (a state called *pratyāhāra* in *ashtanga yoga*, or even *turiya* – the fourth state beyond waking, dreaming, sleeping). But one need not go that deep to benefit; even a moderate practice of mindfulness will significantly enhance day-to-day sense control. The Gita describes a *sthita-prajña* (person of steady wisdom) as one who “*withdraws his senses from sense-objects like a tortoise withdrawing its limbs*”, but it also describes him as “*udāsīna*” – which means “sitting apart, indifferent,” like a witness. That is the mindfulness attitude. And it says “*he is not tormented by the senses*” because although he experiences sense-objects, he remains unattached like a lotus in water.

One more angle: **when identified with body-mind, there is no controller apart**, but when disidentified, one can control them. This is gold. Swami Vivekananda explained once: you can’t lift a chair while sitting on it; you must get off it to lift it. Similarly, you can’t control the mind while you think you *are* the mind; step into the witness position, then you can influence the mind. So by practicing witnessing, you *step off the chair*, so to speak. Immediately self-mastery is many times easier.

“*Just witnessing the body-mind-thoughts without neti-neti also calms the mind and prevents new thoughts from arising.*” Pure mindfulness alone, even without the explicit “*I am not this*”, will lead to calm and to dis-identification as an experience (even if not articulated). Because in the moment of *sākṣhī-bhāva* (witness attitude), identification drops naturally; you don’t have to say *neti-neti* every time if you deeply feel the witness. Many teachers actually caution not to intellectualize too much during mindfulness, just observe – the insight “*I am not this*” will dawn implicitly. Others encourage using a simple reminder like “*I am the witness*”. You can find which works for you or use both at times.

The culmination of this method, if one pursues, is the **meditative absorption (samādhi)** in the Self. One transcends the subject-object duality and enters unity consciousness – the *nirvikalpa samādhi* or *nirvāṇa*. In that state, one realizes the oneness of *nirguna* and *saguna*, of *Shiva* and *Shakti* – essentially that even the play of mind and senses was Self all along, just in a transient form. This is the highest realization where *even the concept of controlling or not controlling becomes irrelevant*, because there is only Self. But until that dawns permanently, we skillfully employ dualistic techniques (like seeing *purusha* vs *prakriti*) to attain mastery and peace.

In summary, **practice mindfulness and the neti-neti perspective regularly, both in sitting meditation and in daily activities**. This leads to a profound shift of identity from the turbulent periphery (senses, body, mind) to the serene center (consciousness). As soon as that shift happens even a little, sense control is no longer a struggle of one part of the mind against another; it becomes the natural consequence of abiding in one’s true nature. The Upanishads declare that the Self is “*akriya*” (actionless) and “*shānta*” (peaceful). When you rest in That, the senses automatically repose. The struggle ends. One becomes, in the Gita’s words, “*like an ocean into which rivers of desires flow, but which is ever being filled yet ever still*”. That inner stillness is both the means and the fruit of successful *indriya-nigraha*.

## Technique 12: Tapasya – Austerity to Build Willpower and Burn Impurities

All the techniques so far have been somewhat *subtle* – involving the mind, breath, and intellect. Now we turn to a more *concrete* practice: **tapasya**, or voluntary austerity. Tapasya literally means “heat” – in spiritual context, generating the inner heat of discipline that purifies one’s nature and strengthens the will. It often involves enduring discomfort or performing difficult vows to **condition the body and mind to obey one’s higher will**. The premise is that by occasionally denying the body-mind some luxuries or pushing it through hardship (within safe limits), you train it to not revolt whenever it doesn’t get its way. You also prove to yourself that *you are stronger than your habits*. This significantly boosts self-control capacity, which obviously aids sense mastery.

In the Hindu tradition, sages and ascetics have famously undertaken tapas: standing on one leg for years, fasting for extended periods, meditating exposed to the scorching sun or freezing cold, maintaining silence for months, etc. The epics and Puranas are full of stories where through **extreme tapas**, a practitioner gains immense willpower or even boons (like divine powers). While such extremes aren’t for most of us (nor necessary), the underlying principle is applicable: **challenge yourself regularly** to endure a bit more than usual, and you will find a new reservoir of strength.

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and *Yoga Sutras* both list **tapa** (austerity) as part of the niyamas (personal observances). Patanjali in *Yoga Sutra* 2.43 says: “*Kāyendriya-siddhir āsuddhi-kṣhayāt tapasah*” – “Through the destruction of impurities by austerity, **perfection of the body and sense-organs** is achieved.” This is key: tapas burns impurities (physical and mental toxins, lazy habits, etc.), and *bestows mastery over body and senses*. Tapa is like a forge that hardens steel. Without occasional heat, the “steel” of our will remains brittle and easily bent by sensual temptations. With heat, it becomes resilient.

### Forms of Tapasya for a modern aspirant:

- **Fasting or Dietary Restraint:** Skipping a meal intentionally or fasting on certain days (taking only water or very light food) is a classic tapas. It directly confronts the tongue and stomach – two big sense-demanders. By fasting, you tell them “I (the will) decide when you get food, not you.” This is very effective to practice moderation. Even a short fast (say, from sunrise to sunset) once a fortnight (many Hindus do Ekādaśī fasts twice a month) can strengthen resolve. On non-fasting days, simply avoiding a favorite snack or eating plain food instead of spiced occasionally is also tapas. The idea is to *bear the discomfort of hunger or blandness calmly*, without immediately reaching for gratification. The Bhagavad Gita calls moderation in diet part of the yoga of self-control. Also, offering the day’s food to God (mentally) and eating as *prasāda* (gift) inculcates an attitude that it’s not for indulgence but for sustenance of God’s temple (the body).
- **Physical Discomforts:** Deliberately stepping out of your comfort zone – e.g., taking a cold shower when you’d prefer hot, walking rather than driving short distances, keeping the AC or heater at a less indulging setting – are small tapas that build tolerance. Or

doing a difficult exercise routine that really pushes your limits (taking care not to injure). The point is to *endure and embrace a bit of pain voluntarily*. Not only does this make you hardy, it also paradoxically increases contentment: you start realizing you need less to be okay. After a cold shower challenge, you might find your body feels invigorated and your mind proud; the urge for, say, some other luxury might automatically diminish because you're riding on a wave of self-mastery satisfaction.

- **Posture or Stillness Challenges:** In meditation or prayer, vow to keep the back straight and not move for a set time. Or hold your arms up during a prayer for a few minutes longer than comfortable. You will feel the burn, but that burn is tapas purifying karmic imprints and boosting will. Ancient yogis would do standing meditation for hours (merely as an extreme form). We can aim smaller: e.g., if meditating for 20 minutes, decide "I will not scratch or adjust posture even if there's an itch or ache. I'll just observe it." This also combines mindfulness. When you succeed and the itch passes, it's a victory over the sense of touch. The senses realize they can scream and you won't immediately dance to their tune. Next time they scream a little less.
- **Vows (Vrata):** Taking a time-bound vow and keeping it is tapas for the mind. For instance, vow to not speak for a morning (mouna tapas), or vow to not complain for a week, or to wake up at 5 AM for 10 days straight, or to refrain from gossip, or to give up coffee for a month. Any such self-challenge, taken seriously, generates heat of effort. Keeping the vow builds immense *śakti* (spiritual strength). Breaking it teaches a lesson in humility (and one can try again). The key is choose something tough but achievable and stick to it. The **act of keeping a promise to yourself** is hugely empowering; it sends a signal to your psyche that *your higher resolve is law*. Then the senses think twice before messing with you, because they know "*This person means what they decide.*"

One must apply **moderation and common sense** in tapas. The goal is not to harm the body or become a masochist. *Manu Smṛti* advises that one should not torture the body out of delusion; tapas is to be done **according to one's capacity and with pure intent**, not ego or imitation. Krishna in the Gita categorizes self-harming or ostentatious austerity as *tāmasika* or *rājasika* – not wise. Sāttvika tapas is done with faith, for self-purification, without craving praise. So, one person's tapas might be running 5 miles daily, another's might be fasting on Fridays – choose what suits your health and life situation. And always combined with devotion or higher purpose: e.g., fast **and** spend time in prayer, so the energy of abstinence is channeled upward.

### How Tapasya aids sense-control:

1. **Develops Willpower ("Ichhā-śakti"):** Sense-control is largely about will vs. whims. Tapas is like a gym for the will. Each time you hold out in discomfort, you do a "rep" of willpower. Over time, just as muscles grow, will grows. Later, when a strong temptation hits, you find an inner voice firmly saying "No" or "Stop" or "Leave" and you're able to obey it – because that voice was strengthened by tapas practice. As Patanjali said, from tapas comes "*siddhi*" of body and senses – meaning mastery or special capability. Many have found that doing morning exercise or cold showers (a mild tapas) makes them more disciplined and focused the rest of the day. The inertia and *tamas* is shaken off by tapas, leaving the mind in a more *sattvic* and alert state that naturally resists indulgence.

2. **Purifies and Reduces Rāga (Attachments):** Tapas uses the fire of hardship to burn subtle attachment. For example, if you love sweets and you fast from them for a month as tapas, the first few days the mind might resist, but by the end, the feverish attachment cools down. You realize “I didn’t really need it, I survived fine without.” The spell breaks. Likewise, enduring silence might break attachment to constant socializing, etc. Tapas also often involves prayerful intention – e.g., many do it as an offering to God or for penance. In doing so, it cleanses guilt and mental toxins that often underlie overindulgence. A purified mind finds moderation easier.
3. **Generates Tejas (a spiritual “heat” or aura):** Traditionally, great tapasvīs (austere yogis) were said to emanate a *tejas* or *ojas* – a spiritual energy. This comes from concentrated life-force that is no longer wasted on trivial enjoyments. Even retaining semen (brahmacharya) is considered a tapas that converts physical energy to ojas, giving glow and vigor. That ojas in turn helps in restraint because it fills you with a subtle satisfaction. Ever notice after finishing a strenuous hike or a tough project, you don’t feel like lazing about or junk eating immediately – you bask in the accomplishment. That’s a bit of tejas making you content. Tapas yields a similar contentment that is *independent* of sense pleasure, thereby **reducing dependence on external stimuli**.
4. **Confidence and Discipline:** Successfully completing austerities builds self-confidence. You start to believe, “*If I can fast for 24 hours, I can surely say no to that cigarette.*” It sets a benchmark of endurance. Discipline in one arena often spills to others (this is called “spillover effect” in psychology). Thus, bodily discipline through tapas may spill into emotional discipline and schedule discipline. The whole personality becomes more orderly and under *svayam-shāśana* (self-governance). The *Bhagavatam* recounts stories of ascetics who by tapas not only controlled senses but even gained powers over nature. We may not seek miracles, but even mastery over our own habits is a miracle by today’s standards – and tapas can deliver that.

In practicing tapasya, **remember moderation and balance**. Ancient rishis did extreme things because their bodies and contexts allowed it and they had divine goals. For us, doing just enough to challenge ourselves is sufficient. It’s better to do mild tapas regularly than to do one extreme thing and crash. **Consistency trumps intensity**. Perhaps hold one small fast weekly, one tough workout weekly, occasional vow, etc., peppered throughout the year – this keeps the will tuned.

Also, **don’t become proud** of austerity; that itself is a sensory pleasure of ego. Krishna warns in Gita 17 that those who torture themselves out of arrogance or to gain respect are demonic in disposition. True tapas is humble. After completing an austerity, mentally offer it to the Divine: “*May this effort purify me and be offered at Your feet.*” This prevents ego-inflation and also invokes grace (which one definitely needs to maintain control lifelong).

One might ask, how does causing pain help spiritually? It’s not about pain for pain’s sake; it’s about **expanding your comfort zone** and **breaking identification with the body**. When you see “I am fine even if the body is in discomfort,” you directly experience “I am not the body.” This is why many monks would do austerities – to realize experientially that their true identity is beyond bodily sensations. For example, standing in cold water until the body is numb, the yogi witnesses the body shaking yet knows “I, the Self, remain unchanged.” This is a dramatic demonstration of spirit over matter. Even at a small scale, say holding a yoga pose in discomfort,

you can find that inner witness who isn't suffering even if the body aches. That strengthens spiritual insight.

Thus, **tapasya hits multiple targets**: it toughens will, purifies attachments, and also fosters Self-knowledge. No wonder it is praised across the traditions. The *Manu Smṛti* 6.70 says: "*Tapas is the best means of self-purification*". The *Mahabharata* (Shānti Parva) says: "*There is nothing that cannot be achieved through tapas.*"

A word of care: If you have health conditions, choose tapas appropriate and maybe consult a guide or doctor. The aim is *self-improvement, not self-harm*. If an austerity is causing more agitation (like severe fasting making you angry and weak), dial it down. The Gita says "*yuktāhāra-vihārasya... yogo bhavati duḥkha-hā*" – "For one of moderate eating and recreation, disciplined in actions, yoga destroys sorrow" (Gita 6.17). So moderation in everything, including moderation (at times we push the limits, but overall maintain balance).

In conclusion, **embrace austerity in small doses to build a big character**. It's like tempering steel or vaccinating against indulgence. A little controlled struggle immunizes you against bigger uncontrolled struggles. When senses realize you mean business and you can endure their tantrums, they gradually quiet down and follow your higher will. As Sri Ramakrishna said, "*One should chew sand (figuratively) to get rid of the greed for spice.*" That is tapas – a bit of sand now so you don't ruin your teeth on too much candy later. The fruit of proper tapas is a **glowing self-mastery** and a radiant tranquility that others can often sense in you (the "tapasvi glow"). More importantly, you sense it in yourself as a newfound *swātmānu-bhūti* (self-confidence and Self-awareness). Then, sense-control is no longer a dreaded challenge, but almost your second nature.



## Technique 13: Pratyāhāra – Conscious Withdrawal of the Senses into the Self

This technique is a bit like a **guided internal visualization** to deliberately retract the senses from their external engagements and merge them into the mind, and then merge the mind into the Self. It is essentially practicing *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal) in a concentrated way. A specific exercise: *imagine each of the five senses gradually absorbing into each other and finally all five unified senses drawing inward into the “center” (heart or seat of consciousness).*

Such visualizations are found in some Yoga and Tantra texts. For instance, *Vijñāna Bhairava Tantra* has dhāraṇās (concentration practices) where one imagines the senses dissolving into consciousness. The Upanishads and Vedantic meditations also speak of withdrawing the senses “like the sun’s rays” or as a tortoise does. The *Yoga Yajnavalkya* or *Gheranda Samhita* give some pratyahara methods that involve imagination in the heart space. Also, as earlier noted, *Vivekachudamani* verse 23 defines **dama (self-control)** as “*withdrawing the senses from the sense-objects and placing them in their respective sources*”. So this exercise is essentially a creative way to enact that definition.

**How to do the conscious retraction practice:** Sit in a quiet place, close your eyes, and take a few deep breaths. Then systematically go through senses:

1. **Vision (Chakṣhu-Indriya):** Imagine your faculty of seeing as two beams extending from your eyes outward. Now visualize *with your inner eye* those beams reversing direction and folding back into your eyes. Perhaps picture your eyelids as doors that close and pull the beams in. Feel that the power of seeing is retreating from forms and colors of the world and coming back to its source in the *ājñā chakra* (between eyebrows) or the brain’s visual center. Say internally, “Sight, return to your origin. There is nothing for you to see outside that isn’t already within.” Perhaps recall the Upanishadic idea: “*The Self effulgent is not seen by the eyes, but **that** by which the eyes see – know That to be Brahman.*” You are aiming to let the eyes rest in the mind.
2. **Hearing (Śrotra-Indriya):** Next, bring attention to your ears. We are normally always listening outward (even in silence, the ears strain for sounds). Now consciously imagine the “*shells*” of your ears turning inward, like a satellite dish swiveling. Envision the energy that was flowing out to capture sound now flowing backward into the auditory cortex or into the “*inner ear*”. Feel a silence where external sounds become insignificant hum, and the ears are now attuned to the **inner sound** (*nāda*) or simply to the silence of your own consciousness. Say mentally, “Hearing, withdraw from external noise and merge into inner stillness.” Perhaps plug your ears gently with fingers for a moment to reinforce the inwardness, then release while maintaining that inward attention.
3. **Taste (Rasa-Indriya):** Bring awareness to the tongue. You might notice residual tastes or saliva. Now imagine drawing the sense of taste inward – you may picture the tongue touching the palate and the taste buds turning inward to “drink” the nectar of the mind. In yoga, they say in deep meditation a sweet nectar (*amṛta*) drips from the palate. Whether or not one literally feels that, just symbolically think: “*I withdraw the sense of taste from outer flavors and direct it to the subtle sweetness of inner peace.*” If you like, actually

press your tongue lightly to the roof of mouth (the khechhari mudra) as if “closing” the tasting outward. Resolve that no craving for flavor will pull it now; it is content in the flavorless (rasa-varjām as Gita 2.59 put it) which becomes supreme rasa (parama-rasa, the taste of Brahman).

4. **Smell (Ghrāṇa-Indriya):** Be aware of the nose and any scents or simply the breath moving. Now visualize the nostrils closing (you can actually gently pinch them for a second) and the sense of smell turning inward – perhaps imagine it moving up the nose into the *āgyā chakra* or down into the lungs/heart area where it dissolves. Intend that “*the faculty of smell merges into the breath and the breath merges into the Self.*” Or that the *prāṇa* carrying smell turns back to the *prāṇa* in the heart. Smell is very externalizing (a whiff of perfume can drag the mind out); by mastering it inward, you symbolically master desire. In some Upanishadic meditations, one reflects “I am not the nose, not smells; I am the Self beyond.” That is *neti-neti* applied to smell.
5. **Touch (Sparśa-Indriya):** Finally, address the skin and the general tactile sense across the body. This one is vast (covering entire body surface). You might imagine a gentle wind that was blowing on your skin from outside now reverses direction and blows from the skin *inward*, carrying all tactile sensations into the core. Or visualize a golden light shrinking from the periphery of your body (skin) into the spine or heart, taking with it the sense of touch. The *Yoga Vasistha* has a metaphor: “Withdraw the senses like a turtle drawing its limbs” – you can feel as if your aura or energy that was extended to the skin now pulls into the center. Say, “Touch, detach from external objects (temperature, texture, pleasure-pain) and unite with the inner cool touch of Spirit.” Sometimes one can actually feel a withdrawal – the body becomes less *sensate*, you lose awareness of it sitting, as your mind absorbs inward. That is *pratyahara* happening.
6. **Unify the Senses:** Now imagine all five senses, as energies, coalescing into one ball of energy inside your heart or head. The scriptures say in deep withdrawal, the senses “*follow*” the mind and merge into it. So think of that – the five powers become the one mind-power. No longer are there five distinct gateways going out; there is just one internalized faculty. This feels like great focus or like all your scattered vitality has come home. Some texts refer to this state as “*indriya pratyāhāra*” – the senses abiding in the mind as bees in a hive.
7. **Merge the Mind into the Self:** Now you take that unified inner sense-mind energy and draw it further in – into the Self. Typically, one might concentrate either in the **heart center** (*anāhata chakra*) or the **crown** or **third eye** – wherever you conceptualize the seat of consciousness. “draw them into your heart/centre of consciousness”. So, focus on the spiritual heart (not the physical heart, but center of chest or slightly to right, as Ramana Maharshi identifies). Imagine the mind like a ray of light or a drop of water falling into a vast, quiet lake of consciousness in the heart. *Plop* – it merges and loses its individual identity. Only pure awareness remains, self-contained. You can accompany this with the thought, “*Mind, withdraw into the ātman, your source.*” Or use a mantra like “Om” and imagine the mind dissolving in that vibration in the heart. The *Maitri Upanishad* describes how in *pratyahara* the mind along with senses is withdrawn, then the intellect is withdrawn, and finally the individual self is absorbed in the highest Self. This may be too advanced to fully experience initially, but even visualizing it has a calming effect.

Sit in that state for a while – no senses active outward, mind very still inward. *You are centered in the Witness*, in the heart's cave. This is the goal of pratyahara practice – a state where external stimuli don't reach you unless you allow. Patanjali says after pratyahara, "*tataḥ param vaśyate indriyāṇām*" – "then follows the supreme mastery over the senses". Because now you have unplugged them at will; you can plug them back when needed. You become like a tortoise – can withdraw when you like, extend when you like.

**When and how often to practice:** This is an excellent meditation to do in the morning (5-10 minutes of this visualization sets a tone of sense-control for the day). Also, you can do a shorter version anytime you feel overstimulated: e.g., after a noisy commute, close office door for 2 minutes and mentally withdraw senses to center, breathe, then re-emerge. It's like a "*sensory reset*". Through repetition, the mind actually learns the route and each time it gets easier and quicker to slip into that interior quiet. Eventually, just a slow breath and *intent* to withdraw might instantly calm the onslaught of sensations (like when overwhelmed or craving).

Linking to scriptures: There's a description in *Yoga Yajnavalkya* (Chapter on Pratyahara) that says: "*One should merge the sense of sound into the mind, merge the mind into the intellect, merge the intellect into the witness Self.*" This is essentially what we did, just expanded with imagery. The *Amrita-Bindu Upanishad* analogizes sense withdrawal to "*joining rivers into the ocean*". So you can also imagine each sense as a river flowing back into the ocean of consciousness.

Also, Vivekananda described a practice: sit and mentally say to your senses "Back! Retire!" and to your mind "Merge in the Atman!" – he said do that daily and you'll gain pratyahara. So this is very aligned with that instruction.

**Benefits observed:** Immediately after doing this, one usually feels *very serene*. The world's noise feels distant. If you open eyes afterward, you may find your vision doesn't immediately cling to objects, it's just a soft gaze (because you rehearsed detaching vision). Similar with hearing – noises feel trivial, almost like echoes in a vast silence you carry within. It's a taste of what a yogi constantly experiences. This is excellent to reduce sensory overstimulation and break compulsions (like constant checking of phone – after withdrawing, the mind no longer hungers so much for pings of input). It also helps for better sleep if done at night – you basically tell senses to shut shop, so insomnia reduces.

One could combine this with the breath or mantra: e.g., as you inhale, imagine drawing a sense inward; as exhale, move to next, etc., then with a final deep inhale draw all inward and hold breath a bit in heart where you imagine everything absorbed, then exhale and just be.

Furthermore, this practice is **reversible** for re-engaging senses mindfully. For instance, after meditation, you can reverse the visualization: "*Now I gently extend the sense of touch outwards to feel the air, extend hearing out to sounds, extend sight out to forms,*" etc., but doing so slowly and consciously. This way you *re-enter the world slowly*, maintaining control. It's like letting the horses out of the stable one by one, but you holding the reins now firmly. This can make transitions smoother (from meditation to activity). But always at any sign of losing control, you can pull them right back in (pratyahara on demand!).

Ancient sources often describe accomplished yogis being able to do pratyahara instantly – like closing all sense doors such that even loud noise or bright light won't disturb since they've "shut off" the link. In the Bhagavatam, Prahlada says a yogi should practice withdrawing senses from sense objects and concentrate on the Self like a tortoise does, and in that state "even if not outwardly mute or blind, he behaves as if he is, due to fixity in Self." We might not be there yet, but practicing a conscious ritual of withdrawal daily definitely moves us closer to that ability.

One can do a short version anytime – e.g., during a break, close eyes: *Inhale, withdraw senses; exhale, merge in Self; sit a bit; inhale, bring awareness back to senses; exhale, open eyes.* This can be 1-2 minutes and still effective. It's almost like a turtle head bob: in-out refresh.

This technique builds an inner autonomy. You realize the senses are yours to retract. You are not their slave, you are the master who can say "Return!" and they obey (with practice). This psychological confidence greatly aids resisting temptations: e.g., if something is too tempting visually, you know you can *literally withdraw sight* (by looking away physically and also mentally detaching) because you've trained in that.

Additionally, advanced variations could include focusing on the "sixth sense" – the mind itself – and withdrawing it into the Self too (like stepping beyond all senses to pure awareness). That's essentially nirvikalpa state glimpsed.

In summary, **Conscious Sense Withdrawal** is a powerful meditative rehearsal of **indriya-nigraha**. It uses imagination aligned with will and prāṇa to symbolically and actually retract the senses, giving a direct experience of inwardness. Over time, this *strengthens the "muscle" of pratyahara*, so that even in real-life situations, you can more easily detach a sense from a stimulus. It also makes you *happier within yourself*, as your happiness becomes less about what you perceive externally and more about the peace you find internally (the "heart center" where you drew everything in). The *Gheranda Samhita* says that through pratyahara one attains "*manonasha*" (extinction of the compulsive mind) and "*paramananda*" (supreme bliss). Indeed, when senses are all pulled into the ocean of Self, the mind with no external fuel subsides, and the bliss of the Self manifests. Even if we taste a fraction of that by practice, it dramatically changes our relationship with sensory pleasures. We realize there's a deeper joy inside – so the desperation for outer joys diminishes, making sense control much more feasible and natural.

Thus, integrating this **pratyahara visualization daily** will accelerate your progress in indriya-nigraha, complementing the other techniques like breath, concentration, etc. It's a direct training of the senses themselves, teaching them to bow to the mind's command. As Vivekachudamani states: "*Turning the sense-organs inward and placing them in their sources is called dama (self-control).*" We have done exactly that in a creative way. The result is a calmer mind, subdued senses, and a taste of the inner light that eclipses the interest in sensory glitter.

## Technique 14: Following Yamas and Niyamas – Ethical Foundation and Mental Unification

No program of sense-control is complete without a strong **moral and psychological foundation**. In yoga, the **yamas (restraints)** and **niyamas (observances)** serve exactly that role. They are the first two limbs of the eightfold yoga, considered indispensable for higher practices. Yamas include non-violence (*ahimsa*), truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), chastity (*brahmacharya*), and non-grasping (*aparigraha*). Niyamas include purity (*shaucha*), contentment (*santosh*), austerity (*tapas*), self-study (*svādhyāya*), and devotion to God (*Īśvara-pranidhāna*). Living by these principles creates a *sattvic (pure)* lifestyle that naturally moderates the senses and stabilizes the mind.

For instance, **Brahmacharya (celibacy or moderation of sexual energy)** directly restrains the sexual sense and preserves vital energy – Patanjali says it leads to “great vigor”. **Ahimsa (non-violence)** curbs aggressive impulses and thus the sense of touch and action (no hitting, etc.). **Satya (truthfulness)** means not letting the tongue (speech) or mind distort reality, which fosters mental discipline. **Aparigraha (non-possessiveness)** weakens greed and the pull of senses toward material accumulation. Similarly, the **niyama of shaucha (cleanliness)** includes keeping the body and mind clean (avoiding intoxicants or dirty inputs, which affect senses), **santosh (contentment)** counters the sense-driven restlessness for more pleasures, etc.

In essence, adhering to yama-niyama keeps the *mind sattvic and unified* rather than fragmented by conflicting desires or guilt. A person who lies, cheats, indulges, and lives chaotically will have a very unrestful mind – such a mind cannot control senses because it’s full of agitations and regrets. Conversely, a virtuous, clean life produces a calm conscience and fewer internal conflicts; the mind is integrated and strong. *“Always be in a happy mood. Never get upset... Ethical living and an unfragmented mind (mind not fragmented by contradictory desires) will keep the mind stable. Only a stable mind can control the senses.”* This is a vital insight.

**Unfragmented mind** means your various parts (intellect, emotion, subconscious desires) are in agreement. Ethical breaches or harboring of contradictory desires (say one part wants spiritual growth, another still craves indulgence) create inner schisms. These schisms weaken will (because part of you will sabotage the other). By following yamas-niyamas, you align your lifestyle with your higher goal, thus removing inner contradictions. For example, taking a **vow of brahmacharya** means you commit fully to channeling sexual energy; then there’s no part of you secretly wanting to binge on sense-pleasures – if such impulses arise, you know your stance and can apply viveka easily (“I’ve chosen brahmacharya for a reason”). If you hadn’t committed, the mind would play tug-of-war (“maybe just a little indulgence?” vs “No, I should abstain”). That inner debate saps strength. So making ethical vows simplifies life by cutting off a lot of extraneous temptations wholesale.

### Key Yamas for Indriya-nigraha:

- *Brahmacharya (continence)*: Arguably the most directly relevant yama for sense-control. It not only means abstaining from sexual indulgence, but also implies moderation in all

sensory enjoyments (sometimes interpreted as “*right use of energy*”). The *Mahabharata* says: “*Brahmacharya is the supreme tapasya.*” The Gita verse we quoted (6.14) highlights being “firm in the vow of brahmacharya” as part of meditation. When one conserves sexual fluid and refrains from lustful behavior, a huge calming of the mind is observed (since sexual desire is among the strongest drives affecting mind and senses). Also, brahmacharya practice tends to increase *ojas/tejas* (subtle vitality), which gives natural glow and strength to resist other temptations. Practically, if you vow to avoid pornography, casual sex, masturbation, etc., you automatically impose discipline on sight, touch, and thought. The **presence of a vow** is powerful; even if difficult at times, it gives a framework to hold you. This ties back to technique 8’s inner dialogue – you can remind the mind “I have given my word to stay celibate this month or until marriage or whatever – I will not break it.” That resolve can stop a cascading sense temptation early.

- *Ahimsa (non-harm)*: At first glance, non-violence might not seem related to sense control, but it is. Many sense-indulgences cause harm (to oneself or others) – e.g., gluttony harms body, lust can harm relationships, etc. If one is deeply rooted in ahimsa, they refrain from actions that cause suffering or loss of health. This means, for example, you won’t overeat because that harms your own body (self-harm violates ahimsa too), you won’t take intoxicants that cloud your mind (because that harms your mental clarity and often leads to harmful actions). Ahimsa fosters compassion and love which are higher sentiments that naturally supplant lower cravings. A compassionate person might avoid meat or alcohol because of empathy; that avoidance concurrently is sense-control (taste and escapism control). Also, by practicing patience and forgiveness (parts of ahimsa), the reactive impulse (like hitting when angry) is controlled – that’s a sense impulse (touch/kinesthetic) mastered.
- *Satya (truthfulness)*: How does truthfulness affect sense-control? It inculcates discipline of speech and thought. If you are committed to truth, you have to control the tongue (no lying) and also your inner exaggerations or denials. This trains mindfulness and restraint. Many lies are told to cover indulgences or to obtain something sensually. Living truthfully often means living simply – you avoid situations where you’d feel tempted to lie (like complicated entanglements). Simplicity reduces sensory clutter too. Moreover, truthfulness to one’s higher self – being honest to your conscience – means you can’t hide behind excuses for sense weakness. You will call a spade a spade: “I slipped; that was against my ideal.” This honesty allows correction and growth. A liar often lies to themselves and continues destructive habits. A truthful aspirant confronts the issue and fixes it, strengthening control.
- *Aparigraha (non-possessiveness)*: This is directly about not hoarding sensory objects. It’s the antidote to greed for accumulating pleasures/possessions. By practicing aparigraha, you deliberately live with minimal belongings and needs, which automatically forces sense restraint (fewer things to indulge in). It fosters contentment with what is, aligning with the *niyama* of *santosha*. For example, if one of your yamas is “no unnecessary buying of gadgets or luxury”, you will not constantly excite the senses with new toys, and the senses gradually settle. It also means letting go of attachments – if someone takes your favorite pen, you practice aparigraha by not getting upset because you don’t cling. That is sense-control in the face of loss.

### Key Niyamas for Indriya-nigraha:

- *Shaucha (purity)*: This includes both external cleanliness and internal (mental) purity. Clean diet (sattvic food), clean environment, bathing, etc., keep the senses less agitated (spicy, rajasic food can overstimulate, dirty body can cause restlessness, etc.). Mental purity means keeping thoughts pure – avoiding pornography, violent media, gossip, etc. By inputting only clean sensory impressions, you make sense-control easier. It's like a person trying to quit sugar – if their house is clean of sweets (outer purity) and their mind is not constantly watching dessert videos (inner purity), they'll have a smoother time. Purity also refers to removing toxic emotions (anger, jealousy) which often drive sense indulgence as coping. So by practicing forgiveness and contentment, you purify those poisons, indirectly curbing irrational indulgences used to numb those emotions.
- *Santosha (contentment)*: This is the practice of being happy with what one has and what one doesn't have. If truly content, one doesn't crave novel sense pleasures. One yogic saying: "*Contentment is the greatest wealth.*" If you cultivate gratitude daily (e.g., journaling things you're grateful for), the void that pushes one to chase sensory highs shrinks. A content person can sit quietly without needing external stimulation – a huge boon for sense-control. They also don't get upset (the idea is to maintain a cheerful equanimity). When the mind is not upset, it doesn't grasp for quick fixes (like junk food when sad, etc.). Thus contentment is preventative sense-control.
- *Svadyaya (self-study of scriptures)*: Regular study keeps the mind focused on wisdom and life's higher purpose, which by itself curbs lower distractions. It's hard to be reading the Gita daily and simultaneously planning immoral indulgences – the dissonance will catch you. Svadyaya also means introspection – learning from one's mistakes. By writing diary or reflecting, "Today I slipped here, why? How to avoid tomorrow?", you bring yogic self-awareness to sense control efforts. Scriptures also often contain inspiring stories of those who mastered senses (like King Janaka, or mythic rishis) – these motivate you and provide methods.
- *Ishvara Pranidhana (devotion and surrender to God)*: (This is actually technique 15, but as a niyama, it intersects.) Keeping God in one's heart through prayer, japa, remembering that results are God's will – these attitudes *diminish ego and desire*. If I offer everything to God, I am less likely to engage in something adharmic (unrighteous) because it would dishonor my offering. Also, devotion transmutes and channels sensory yearnings to love for God (just as sublimation in technique 2). A devotee might sing kirtan instead of listen to pop music, might decorate an altar instead of their own body lavishly – so senses get engaged but in a divine direction. This often naturally leads to moderation (devotees often follow some self-restraints happily as a service to God, like fasting on holy days, abstaining from intoxicants etc.). And surrender ("whatever comes is Thy gift") leads to calm acceptance rather than sense-driven restlessness for specific outcomes. We will elaborate on Ishvara Pranidhana in the next technique, but suffice it here that as a niyama, it sanctifies daily life and makes virtue easier through grace.

**"Always be in a happy mood. Never get upset."** – the essence is maintain a *positive, balanced mindset*. If you fail in some sense-control, don't get morose – pick up cheerfully and resolve again. If someone insults you, practice kṣhamā (forgiveness, part of ahimsa) instead of flying off handle. A steady cheerful mind doesn't swing to extremes where senses usually break loose. Many indulgences happen when we are either too elated (celebratory overeating/drinking) or too depressed (comfort eating, etc.). By tempering both – not overly excited in victory, not overly

dejected in loss (Gita's samatvam) – you avoid those extremes that lead to bingeing. The Gita calls this “*sthita prajña*” (steady wisdom) whose symptoms include: “*nābhinandati, na dveṣṭi*” – he neither rejoices wildly nor hates bitterly in any circumstance. Following yama-niyama cultivates such stability.

**Satsanga (Company of Saints/Gurus):** *Yama of good company* could be considered – because it's external restraint (avoid bad company), and *niyama of attending satsang* is internal observance. Both profoundly help to control senses by peer influence (in saintly company, one feels ashamed to degrade themselves with base pleasures).

In summation for technique 13: **Live an ethical, clean life with firm vows (like celibacy, non-addiction, truthfulness) and positive habits (cleanliness, contentment, devotion).** This lays the groundwork for successful sense-control. It is the **soil** in which the other techniques (which are like seeds) can flourish. Without ethical discipline, any amount of prāṇāyāma or concentration might falter because the mind will be unsettled by guilt, conflict, or impurity. The scriptures are unanimous that yama-niyama are “*the great vows*” (*mahāvratā*), not to be skipped. They hold universally, regardless of time, place, circumstance – meaning even in modern life, honesty, self-control, etc. are non-negotiable for a spiritual seeker. By following them, you **prevent many sensory distractions at the root.** It's easier to renounce temptation in principle (through a vow) than to fight it repeatedly piecemeal. So take wise vows and stick – it simplifies life and channels energy.

And an ethically stable mind becomes “**unfragmented**” – i.e., integrated. When you say something, you mean it; when you resolve, all parts of you align (no hidden agenda). This unity gives tremendous power. The Kaṭha Upanishad (1.3.13) says: “*When the senses are unified with the mind and the mind with the intellect and the intellect with the Self, the wise call him a great sage.*” Conversely, “*If the intellect is not firm and the mind uncontrolled, the senses are like wild horses for that driver*” – meaning disunity leads to run-away senses. So indeed, **ethical living unifies the inner faculty** and is indispensable for mastering the outer sensory horses.



## Technique 15: Satsang – Keeping the Company of Saints and Avoiding the Wicked

“Tell me who your friends are, and I’ll tell you who you are,” goes a saying. The company we keep has a profound influence on our mind and thus on our ability to control our senses. In Sanskrit, *satsaṅga* means “association with the Sat (Truth or the good)”, often referring to spending time with saints, gurus, or like-minded spiritual aspirants. Conversely, *kusanga* is bad company – those immersed in worldliness and vice. The scriptures repeatedly advise seeking satsang and shunning kusang as a key practice on the path.

Why is this important for sense-control? **Because human beings are highly suggestible and prone to social conformity.** If you surround yourself with people who are disciplined, pure, and focused on higher ideals, you will naturally feel supported and even subtly pressured to uphold those standards. Your senses, seeing that “everyone around me is content and moderate,” will quiet down (social proof effect). On the other hand, if your circle indulges in heavy partying, materialistic talk, or negative behaviors, even if you resolve to restrain, you’ll be dragged along by peer influence or at least constant temptation and normalization of indulgence. The *Bhagavatam* (3.23.56) says: “*Even a wise person gets colored by the company they keep, just as a drop of water takes the color of the ink it mixes with.*”

### Positive influence of Satsang:

- When you are **physically in the presence of a saint or an advanced yogi**, it is observed that one’s mind becomes very calm and uplifted. Often, one loses taste for trivial pleasures in those moments because a higher joy or peace is felt coming from the saint’s vibe or words. This is sometimes described as catching the “vibration” of their tapas and purity. For example, sitting with a Guru who radiates love, you might find your usual restlessness subsiding – the senses sort of bow down in that sacred atmosphere. There are many accounts of people giving up lifelong bad habits simply by associating with a saint for some time, as if the saint’s influence *burnt out the desire*.
- In satsang gatherings (like kirtans, scriptural discussions, meditation retreats), the **group energy** helps hold each individual to a higher standard. It’s easier to meditate an hour when everyone in the hall is silently meditating (group coherence) as opposed to alone at home with TV next door. Likewise, if all your friends are vegetarian due to spiritual principles, you’ll likely adhere to vegetarianism easily – the collective lifestyle reinforces it.
- Saints often give **guidance and insight** that directly help curb sense temptations. One saint might share a technique how they overcame anger, another might narrate the ill-effects of indulgence they’ve seen, etc. These teachings sink deeper because they come from realized souls and often are delivered with compassion that touches the heart. E.g., hearing a saint describe the *bliss of meditation surpasses any sensual pleasure* can create a strong samskara in you that pulls you away from lesser thrills.
- Just the **sight of holy lives** is inspiring. You see an old monk who has lived 50 years with minimal possessions, radiating happiness – it challenges your senses’ assumption that “enjoyment = stuff and thrills”. Real-life role models are very effective in resetting our

aspirations. Adi Shankara in *Bhaja Govindam* verse 9 (which we cited) emphasizes satsang (good company) as the first step that leads to detachment. “*Satsangatve nissangatvam*” – from good company arises non-attachment. The explanation: in holy company, one naturally grows detached from frivolities (because one sees through others’ example and discourse the higher truth and the futility of chasing senses). This leads to being free of delusion, steady in truth, and eventually liberated.

### Negative influence of Kusang (bad company):

- If you hang out with people who gamble, drink, use foul language, watch explicit content, etc., it becomes extremely challenging to maintain your vows and purity. Initially you might resist, but repeated exposure normalizes those behaviors in your mind, and gradually your standards lower. As a common proverb in Sanskrit says: “*Doṣho yogenā puṁsām*” – people’s faults rub off by association. The *Garuda Purana* warns that just as a drop of oil spreads in water, one person’s impurity can affect an entire group.
- Often, our sense falls are triggered by social situations: e.g., you might not smoke on your own, but with friends who smoke, you give in. Or you may keep celibacy well alone, but a friend drags you to a strip club and you lose control. Thus, avoiding such scenarios by choosing friends who won’t lead you there is a preventive measure.
- Beyond explicit temptations, even the *conversation topics* matter. If your friends constantly talk about shopping, movies, dating, gossip – your mind stays engaged in sensory, worldly thought, making it harder to focus inward. Whereas friends who ask “Did you meditate today? What did you learn from that Gita verse?” keep your mind aligned to sadhana.

“*Mind will reach sattvic state automatically in presence of saints/self-realized souls and will lead to automatic sense control due to sattvic state. Avoid the company of bad people always.*” This is a straightforward cause-effect: saintly presence -> mind becomes calm, pure (sattva) -> senses spontaneously calm. Wicked presence -> mind becomes agitated, rajasic/tamasic -> senses get excited and unruly. It is like *osmic environment*: if you are in a perfumery, your clothes smell of perfume; in a fish market, of fish. So choose the “fragrance” you want.

### How to implement Satsang practically:

- **Seek out a holy community or mentor.** If you have access to a realized guru or even a reputable yoga/meditation group, spend time with them regularly. Even attending weekly satsang (like a scripture class or group meditation or bhajan singing in a temple) can recharge your determination and keep you on track.
- **Spend time in holy places.** Visiting ashrams, temples, monasteries, or even nature (since saints love nature’s serenity) gives the mind an uplift. Many find when they go on a spiritual retreat, breaking away from worldly environment, it becomes much easier to control habits (less urge to check phone, etc.). That’s environment at work.
- **Choose virtuous friends.** If your current friend circle is toxic for your goals (say they belittle your practices or tempt you), you might need to distance gently and find new company of those who appreciate your lifestyle. It can be tough but often necessary. Alternatively, influence the circle slowly by introducing higher talk and seeing if anyone

resonates; often, at least one friend might join you on the path and then you have satsang with each other, and gradually move away from the others.

- **If live satsang is hard to find, use books/videos** of saints. Reading autobiographies of sages or scriptures commentated by enlightened masters can be a form of satsang (association through thoughts). Thinking of them often (“What would my guru say about this impulse? Likely to refrain.”) creates an inner satsang in your mind’s counsel. *“If no guru nearby, remember God as your guru mentally.”* That is valid – visualize conversing with a saint or deity when you need guidance (like Arjuna with Krishna). This imaginative satsang can check your impulses (you might feel ashamed to indulge as if your guru is watching – which is good shame, keeps you virtuous).
- **Shun explicit bad company diplomatically:** If certain gatherings or people always lead to trouble (e.g., a buddy whose only plan is bar-hopping), start excusing yourself kindly from those plans. Eventually, they’ll get it. You need not confront or preach to them (unless appropriate), simply fade out of those scenes. The void will be filled by better habits or connections if you seek them.

The power of satsang is extolled in many texts: *Bhagavata Purana* 1.2.16 says: *“By great fortune, one gets satsanga; from satsanga, there arises devotion and knowledge spontaneously.”* It also says even a **moment** of satsang can open the door to liberation. Ramakrishna said: “The water of the mind is clear, but the fish of bad company roil it up.” Remove those fish, or move to clear pond.

While satsang elevates, **kusang degrades**. Another famous Bhaja Govindam verse says: *“Give up bad company, seek the company of the noble.”* It uses metaphor: *“Company of the holy is like immediate cooling shade from scorching sun, whereas bad company is like being constantly scorched.”* We must be mindful – sometimes we can’t entirely avoid certain people (colleagues, family). In those cases, practice a form of internal satsang: keep your mind anchored in guru or mantra when around them, limit conversation to necessary, don’t get sucked into their topics, and maybe silently pray for their upliftment so you maintain compassion but not fall into their patterns. Also, **be mindful of media as company** – spending hours on sensational news or trashy shows is akin to bad company, while watching a satsang on YouTube is good company. In our digital age, we curate our “company” partly by our subscriptions and feeds. Choose wisely.

A hidden benefit: In saintly company, one tends to automatically practice yamas-niyamas because everyone does. In bad company, one tends to violate them because everyone does. So satsang reinforces the previous technique’s foundation too, whereas kusang undermines it.

**Psychologically**, humans are wired for imitation (mirror neurons). Satsang leverages that to help you imitate virtues; kusang unfortunately triggers imitation of vices. There’s also the factor of **accountability and support** – in satsang, if you admit struggling with something, others might encourage or advise, whereas in a bar, if you said “I’m struggling to quit drinking”, the peers might tease or dismiss it, dragging you down.

Therefore, technique 14 is somewhat a **social engineering** of your spiritual life: surround yourself with vibrations (people or content) that align to self-control and avoid those that glamorize indulgence. This essentially *changes the default setting*. If earlier your default

weekend plan was something sense-luring with friends, now maybe it's attending a yoga class or volunteering with spiritually minded folks – one leads you towards restraint, the other didn't. Over time, this dramatically affects your progress.

Finally, beyond aiding sense-control, satsang has a direct joy and nourishment for the soul. It reminds you *why* you're controlling the senses – not to live dryly, but to channel energy to higher love and knowledge. In saintly company, you often feel a taste of divine love or peace that far exceeds sense pleasure. That taste diminishes the allure of sense objects (much like technique 2 of higher focus). So satsang is actually a composite technique: it sublimates desires by giving higher fulfillment, it strengthens resolve by moral support, and it mentally conditions you through association. It's hard to overstate its importance – many saints credit satsang as the single most important thing for spiritual growth.

*“Mind reaches sattvic state automatically in presence of saints... will lead to automatic sense control.”* a sattvic (pure, harmonious) mind is naturally moderate and content. It is rajas (passion) that drives frenzy of senses, and tamas (ignorance) that drives dull indulgence. Satsang infuses sattva in you. Therefore, keep your *antenna tuned* for positive associations and *cautiously step away* from negative ones. This doesn't mean judge or hate those who live differently; it means prudently protecting your mind while perhaps silently blessing or setting a quiet example that might even uplift some of them eventually. But first secure your own foundation.

In conclusion: **Seek holy company and spurn the unholy.** The *Kaṭha Upanishad* (1.2.24) says: *“The Self cannot be attained by one who has not abstained from bad conduct, nor by one devoid of faith... But if a person's intellect has been saturated with holy teachings (and company), he attains it.”* Perhaps dramatized, but clear: environment matters. Satsang is like a **protective shield**; kusang is like exposing a wound to dirt. So for successful indriya-nigraha, bathe the mind often in the Ganges of satsang, and avoid the sewers of negative influence.

## Technique 16: Ishvara Pranidhana – Surrender to Divine Guidance and Grace

After all the self-effort involved in the previous techniques, we come to a humbling truth: **ultimate victory over the senses is very difficult without divine grace.** Human will alone can take us far, but there are limits to our strength and understanding. Thus, the wise invariably counsel to seek help from a higher power – be it God, Guru, or the inner Divine Self. *Ishvara-pranidhāna* means “*devotional surrender to God*”, one of the niyamas in Yoga Sutras. It involves **acknowledging one’s dependence on the Supreme Will, constantly remembering the Divine, offering all actions and their fruits to God, and seeking the Lord’s guidance in every endeavor.**

How does this help with sense-control? In several profound ways:

1. **Removal of Ego (the root of desires):** Much of our sense-craving is tied to ego – “*I want this pleasure, I accomplished that indulgence, I am the enjoyer.*” When we adopt an attitude “Not I, but Thy will be done; I am but an instrument of the Divine,” the ego-driven craving loses ground. If you truly feel “God is the doer, I’m just offering service,” then chasing selfish sensory highs starts to feel incongruent. It’s replaced by a spirit of service and devotion. For example, instead of eating to gratify the tongue, a devotee might eat to nourish “God’s temple (the body)” or even offer the food mentally to God before tasting (prasada mindset). This subtle shift sanctifies the act and prevents overeating or wrong eating because now it’s for God’s pleasure, not just your senses. The Bhagavad Gita frequently says: “*Whatever you do, whatever you eat, offer it to Me*” (Gita 9.27). By offering all results to God, one is **detached from success/failure** and thus from the emotional swings that often lead to indulgence as coping.
2. **Security and Contentment in God’s care:** “*One will have security that he is acting according to will and grace of God and also gain bliss due to detachment from success/failures.*” This faith (“God is taking care of me, I don’t need to chase worldly things for security or happiness”) yields a deep contentment and fearlessness which drastically reduce compulsive desires. Many addictions stem from insecurity, anxiety, or loneliness – surrendering to God addresses those root feelings with trust and divine companionship. When you feel **truly guided and loved by the Divine**, the need to fill voids with sensory kicks diminishes. A devotee often feels an inner joy (bhakti-rasa) that is subtler but far sweeter than sense pleasures, thereby naturally controlling the senses through fulfillment, not just suppression. They can say like the Psalmist, “*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*” (meaning I lack nothing). In Gita 6.17, Krishna says those who are *yuktāhāra-vihārasya* (moderate in diet and recreation) eventually experience “*duḥkha-hā*” (destruction of sorrow); surrender to God expedites this moderate and joyful lifestyle by the grace he bestows.
3. **Divine Strength to Overcome Vasanas:** We all carry latent tendencies (vasanas) that can ambush our will (the proverbial “spirit is willing, flesh is weak”). Divine grace can work inside us to weaken those vasanas in a way pure discipline might not. Often devotees testify, “I had a craving I couldn’t shake, I prayed intensely, and somehow the craving was lifted or the circumstances changed to remove the temptation.” There’s a

saying: “*God helps those who help themselves,*” but also “*Without God’s help, our self-help is not enough.*” By sincerely praying, “*Lord, please remove my attachment to X; please take charge of my senses which I struggle to rein in,*” you invite a force beyond your ego to intervene. The Gita 7.14 says: “*This divine maya (the force of world and senses) is hard to overcome, but those who take refuge in Me cross it easily.*”. Krishna assures in 12.7 (quoted before) that **for those who dedicate all actions to Him, He swiftly delivers them from the ocean of samsara (birth-death)** – samsara in practical terms includes being enslaved by sense urges. So, trusting that promise, one surrenders: “*I cannot do this alone, Lord. I lean on You.*”

4. **Continuous Remembrance (Smarana):** If one invokes God “throughout the day” – basically keeping some japa or prayer in mind nearly always – that automatically occupies the mind as in technique 6 (divided focus) with something sublime. You can’t be simultaneously repeating a mantra and plotting a sinful indulgence effectively – one will displace the other. In the early stage, perhaps back-and-forth occurs, but as devotion deepens, the mind more effortlessly stays with God’s name or form, leaving little room for craving to take hold. “Invoke God frequently and ask for guidance and help.” This means in every challenge (“I’m feeling an urge to do X”), instead of succumbing, you pause: “*Dear God, please guide me now. What should I do?*” That pause with prayer often is enough to deflate the urge and align you with a higher perspective. Sometimes a clear intuition or circumstance then guides you away from trouble.
5. **Grace to neutralize results (karma-phala):** By offering all results of actions to God (win or lose), one is not as disturbed by outcomes. Many a time, overindulgence happens as coping mechanism for failure or over-excitement in success. But if success is offered to God (so no egotistic high) and failure too (so no crushing low because you accept it as God’s will or prasada), then emotional equilibrium is maintained. The person doesn’t spiral into a bender or celebratory spree that overshoots moderation. Also, detachment from results encourages focusing on duty (like doing what’s right, not what’s pleasurable). Krishna said, “*siddhy-asiddhyoh samo bhūtvā samatvam yoga ucyate*” – being equal in success and failure is called Yoga (Gita 2.48). This equanimity is easier if you trust the outcome to God. For example, if you applied for a job and didn’t get it, instead of drowning sorrow in drinks, a devotee might say “It was God’s plan; something else will come; I’ll continue my efforts in faith.” That faith prevents the sense-reckless reaction.
6. **Devotion replaces passion:** Ishvara-pranidhana fosters love for God (bhakti). Bhakti is an emotion that can satiate the heart’s need for passion and excitement in a far safer way than worldly passions. Often bhaktas (devotees) are seen singing, dancing, weeping in ecstasy – their emotional energetic side is fulfilled in divine love, so they don’t seek it in, say, romantic or lustful escapades. Their senses find full engagement in devotional acts (seeing the deity’s beauty, tasting prasada, hearing kirtan, etc.) but those acts are purifying and not sense-binding (because done without lust/greed and with surrender attitude). Thus, devotion is a clever re-channeling of sense energies to spiritual enjoyment. It’s said in bhakti texts: “*Yat pāda-paṅkaja-parāga-niśevakeṣu, bhaktir bhavati na tu jantuṣu*” – those who delight in serving God’s lotus feet (metaphor), do not find delight in base sense objects. They’ve had a paradigm shift of what’s enjoyable.

Now, how to practice Ishvara Pranidhana practically:

- **Begin the day remembering God:** “As soon as you wake up, remember God, invoke God into body and mind, pray for guidance and grace. Remember your vows of celibacy, nonviolence, truthfulness etc., and pray for help keeping them. Offer any results to God. Remember it’s God doing through you, not you.” This sets a tone of humility and dedication. Affirm, *“O Lord, this day is Your gift; live through me, act through me. I surrender my ego at Your feet; please steer me away from wrong and towards right.”* Some literally visualize their guru or deity in their heart or above their head guiding them all day. This perspective means every sense impulse gets filtered: “Would my Divine Master approve? If not, I won’t do it.” It’s a loving accountability beyond just self.
- **Remember throughout the day:** Possibly do japa (repetition of a divine name) silently whenever idle, or short prayers at certain times (like midday or before tasks). “Invoke God frequently, remember images of past and current realized souls and ask their help and guidance, making mental company if not nearby.” This is like always having your guru with you in spirit (ties with satsang too).
- **Offer actions and enjoyments to God:** Before each meal, say a grace offering the food to God (implying “let me eat in moderation as a sacred act”). Before starting work, say “I offer this at Your feet, use me as instrument.” After finishing, mentally give the result: if success, say “All glory to You, thank you”; if failure, say “I trust this too is Your plan, and I accept it with equanimity.” This practice gradually dissolves the false sense of “my achievement/my failure” that often leads to pride or depression and subsequent intemperance.
- **When struggling, pray fervently:** If you’re in throes of a temptation – e.g., craving a substance or on verge of breaking celibacy – literally pause and pray out loud if possible: *“God, I am weak now, please give me strength. I surrender this urge to You, please take it away or give me fortitude to endure it.”* Many recovering addicts use this technique: in 12-step programs, surrendering to Higher Power is central. It works because it shifts perspective and often one feels a wave of empowerment or the urge subsiding as grace intervenes (even if psychologically, it gives you a break from obsessing to call on help). Mention of Carl Jung’s Red Book in technique 8 ironically ties – fun fact: Jung wrote the foreword to Alcoholics Anonymous, noting that spiritus (alcohol) is replaced by Spirit (God) for true recovery. Surrender to God fills the void that one was filling with sense objects.
- **Cultivate devotion through bhakti practices:** Kirtan singing, reading devotional poems, visiting temples/church, etc. These soften the heart toward God and gradually one finds more joy in these than clubbing or shopping sprees. It’s not overnight, but with sincerity, a devotional sweetness dawns that dwarfs sense sweets. The Gita 18.54-55 suggests that tasting the bliss of Brahman and devotion, one loses interest in other things.
- **Remind of divine gaze:** Keep an attitude “God is watching lovingly”. Not in a judgmental big-brother way, but as a caring parent who is sad when you harm yourself and joyous when you do well. That feeling of not wanting to disappoint the Divine Beloved can restrain you when your own logic fails. Many bhaktas think of God as friend (Sakha-bhava) or parent or beloved – they then behave as if wanting to be worthy in that relationship. Eg: *“I won’t indulge, because I promised God or I carry my guru’s image and must honor it.”*
- **Detachment from outcomes:** Consciously practice *“I do my best, the rest leave to God.”* If something undesirable happens (loss, insult), say *“It is prasad (sacred offering) from*

*God to teach me or test me, I accept with gratitude.*” That way you don’t react with sense-pleasure seeking to pacify your disappointment. Similarly, if a desire is not fulfilled, think *“If God willed, it would happen; if not, it’s for my good. I let it go.”* This surrender is tough but enormously liberating.

*“It is not possible to gain control over senses, unless divine grace is there.”* And *“invoke God often, offer all results to God, pray regularly... This will help overcome attachments to worldly results and also provide security that you act under God’s will. Also prevents ego inflation and falling into samsara (worldly attachments).”* Grace is like the wind in your sails; your effort is rowing. Combined, you swiftly reach the shore of mastery; with only rowing and no wind, you may tire; with only wind and no rowing (i.e., only praying but no effort) you might drift aimlessly. So the ideal approach is both: strive as if it all depends on you, pray as if it all depends on God.

One should note surrender isn’t passivity. It’s active trust. You still do your part in controlling senses (use will, techniques, etc.), but you continually keep God in loop, attributing credit to Him for successes and leaning on Him in weakness. That synergy yields steady progress with fewer relapses, and if relapses happen, you feel forgiveness through devotion and bounce back rather than give up in guilt (some can’t forgive themselves, but believing God forgives if you sincerely repent helps you move on rather than spiral deeper in vice due to guilt).

Finally, Ishvara-pranidhana is said in Yoga Sutras 1.23 to be a standalone method to samadhi (superconscious absorption). So indeed, surrender can bring about the complete tranquility of mind where senses are automatically transcended in samadhi by God’s grace, even if one’s other efforts were lacking. Many saints emphasize: *“When your human efforts fail, call on Divine Mother or God – She will lift you in Her arms across the jungle of senses.”* This tender analogy shows that at some point, Divine picks up the child (sadhaka) and finishes the journey. One must make oneself deserving of that by sincere longing and effort, but the final blow to ego and desires often comes as a gift. Hence, humility and prayer are key.

In summation, **embrace Ishvara Pranidhana: make God your constant partner, guide, and refuge** in this journey. It infuses all other techniques with a higher power and purpose. It also corrects attitude – instead of pride “I am conquering my senses,” it becomes “By Thy grace, my senses are in check; not my will, but Thy will.” That humility itself is protective (pride often leads to a fall via temptation, humility keeps one vigilant and seeking help).

**Important Note :** **“Invoke God always and remember it is God acting through you. This prevents ego inflation and falling into worldly attachments or samsara.”** So after each success (say you resisted a big temptation), instead of ego swelling (“I did it, I’m so strong!” – which ironically could set one up for a future slip through overconfidence), you say, “Thank you, Lord, for helping me overcome that; it was Your strength, not mine.” This way you remain grounded and in touch with the source of strength. And the next challenge, you naturally seek His aid again rather than letting ego handle and perhaps fail.

Therefore, **Surrender and Grace** ties the whole sadhana together. It ensures that the pressure isn’t all on your limited personality; you have infinite backup. And it ensures the end goal –



realization of the Divine – is kept front and center, so sense-control is not for its own sake but as part of loving God with a pure heart and body. That love then makes sense-control a joy rather than a burdensome duty. As one mystic said, *“Oh Lord, take away my everything that takes me away from You.”* That is an Ishvara-pranidhana prayer for sense-control in a nutshell. And when offered sincerely, such prayers are invariably answered by the compassionate Divine.

With all these techniques – from physical restraint and breath control to inner inquiry, lifestyle changes, holy company, and surrender – a practitioner covers the full spectrum of approaches: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. Each technique reinforces the others. Ultimately, **indriya-nigraha** (sense mastery) is not about brutally suppressing the senses, but about **educating, purifying, and redirecting them** so that they serve our highest good rather than sabotage it. The ancient Sanskrit scriptures provide not only the wisdom but the practical toolkit to accomplish this, relevant even today. By diligently applying these methods and seeking divine grace, one can indeed transform the turbulent “chariot” of the body into a well-controlled vehicle, reach the supreme destination of Self-realization, and along the journey enjoy a life of balance, freedom, and inner peace.

# Summary of Indriya Nigraha Techniques

In the journey of mastering the senses, the ancient Sanskrit scriptures offer us a diverse and comprehensive set of tools. These methods, drawn from the Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, Yoga Sūtras, Haṭha Yoga, Kriyā Yoga, and various philosophical commentaries, coalesce into sixteen foundational techniques for *Indriya Nigraha*—the art of restraining the senses. Together, they offer both outer discipline and inner illumination, practical effort and mystical surrender.

## 1. Physical Detachment of Sense Organs from Their Objects:

Sense control begins with the simplest of acts—removing the sense organs from external stimuli. Just as the tortoise withdraws its limbs, we too are advised to close the eyes, avoid tempting sights or sounds, or physically move away from provocative situations. This literal *pratyāhāra* provides immediate relief from external agitation and sets the stage for deeper inner work.

## 2. Redirecting Focus to Higher Tasks:

Suppression alone is not sustainable. Scriptures recommend that lower impulses such as lust or greed be **sublimated** into nobler pursuits—devotion (*bhakti*), selfless service (*seva*), or the pursuit of higher knowledge (*jñāna*). As Lord Krishna teaches, only when one experiences the *higher taste* does the craving for lower pleasures naturally fall away.

## 3. Establishing the Hierarchy of Control (Chariot Analogy):

The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* offers the beautiful image of the body as a chariot: the senses as horses, the mind as reins, the intellect (*viveka*) as the charioteer, and the Self as the passenger. Internalizing this order helps one understand who must control whom. If the intellect is asleep, the horses (senses) run wild. But if the *buddhi* is awake, the journey is steady and purposeful.

## 4. Regular Taming of Senses and Mind:

Understanding the hierarchy is not enough—it must be enforced. This technique involves daily mental training, giving firm commands to the mind and body and expecting obedience. Like training a stubborn horse, repeated instruction and discipline tame the senses and help the practitioner regain inner command.

## 5. Control According to Haṭha Yoga:

Haṭha Yoga emphasizes that the **mind controls the senses**, and the **breath controls the mind**. Thus, rhythmic breathing and **kumbhaka** (breath retention) are key. A mind anchored in a calm, regular breath is less susceptible to distraction. Daily awareness of the breath—especially during routine activities—becomes a silent controller of sensory impulses.

## 6. Control According to Kriyā Yoga:

Kriyā Yoga presents a subtler sequence: senses are governed by the mind, which is stilled by the breath, which in turn is stilled by awareness of **inner nāda** (inner sound). Focusing on the subtle inner vibration brings breath to stillness, which silences the mind and thereby curbs the senses effortlessly.

## 7. Maintaining Continuous Concentration:

A steady, continuous thread of focus—sometimes even divided between an internal object like

the breath and the external task at hand—helps maintain awareness and detachment. This state of *divided attention* is a cornerstone of both yogic mindfulness and practical spiritual living.

### **8. Regular Kumbhaka and Rhythmic Breathing:**

Interspersed throughout the day, brief sessions of slow, deep breathing with light kumbhaka (breath-holding) stabilize prāṇa and still the mind. This regulates the nervous system, calms emotional fluctuations, and gives immediate mastery over sensory agitation.

### **9. Regular Application of Viveka (Discernment):**

The inner faculty of discrimination—*viveka*—must be used throughout the day. When a desire or craving arises, one can engage in **internal dialogue**: questioning the source of the craving, tracing its consequences, and redirecting the mind toward a higher goal. Jung’s method of “active imagination” or “inner talking” similarly helps unify inner conflicts and disarm compulsions through conscious integration.

### **10. Cultivating Vairāgya (Dispassion):**

Vairāgya is not indifference, but clarity—the ability to see the **fleeting nature of sensual pleasures** and contrast it with the abiding bliss of the Self (*sat-chit-ānanda*). By reminding oneself of the impermanence of thoughts, emotions, and pleasures, and by applying the *neti-neti* method, one cultivates a quiet detachment that becomes natural and joyful.

### **11. Practicing Mindfulness and Neti-Neti:**

Mindfulness meditation, especially when combined with the *neti-neti* approach, deepens disidentification with the body, mind, and emotions. The practitioner remains a **witness (puruṣa)** to all experiences, watching thoughts and sensations rise and fall like waves. This presence dissolves compulsive reactivity and strengthens the inner stillness.

### **12. Tapasya (Austerities):**

Discomfort, when voluntarily embraced, becomes transformative. Practicing mild **tapasya**—such as fasting, postural holds, or simple acts of physical restraint—generates **inner heat** (tapas) that burns latent desires and forges a strong will. Moderation is essential; tapasya must be sustained and non-harming.

### **13. Conscious Withdrawal of the Senses (Pratyāhāra):**

Visualization practices can help internalize sensory withdrawal. The practitioner imagines each sense merging into the next, then all five senses merging into the heart or the center of awareness. Practiced during the morning and intermittently throughout the day, this trains the senses to obey the command of inwardness.

### **14. Observance of Yama and Niyama (Ethical and Personal Disciplines):**

Ethical living is foundational. Observing **yamas** like *brahmacharya* (celibacy), *ahimsa* (non-violence), and *satya* (truth) purifies the mind. Practicing **niyamas** like cleanliness, contentment, self-study, and regular meditation maintains inner alignment. Resolving inner contradictions—using tools like Jung’s dialogue and mindfulness—brings stability, and only a stable mind can master the senses.

### **15. Keeping the Company of Saints (Satsang):**

The company of **realized souls** exerts an uplifting influence. Just being in their presence—or even recalling their lives and words—naturally raises the mind to a **sattvic** (pure) state. Conversely, bad company lowers mental vibration and strengthens the pull of the senses. Thus, one must actively **seek Satsang and avoid Kusang** (bad company).

### **16. Ishwarapraṇidhāna (Surrender to the Divine):**

Ultimately, lasting sense-control cannot be achieved through effort alone. One must **surrender to the Divine**, invoke grace, and offer all actions and their fruits to God. This attitude of **Ishwarapraṇidhāna** maintains humility, dissolves attachments, and preserves the inner security that “God is acting through me.” By invoking God frequently and remembering that all comes from Him, the practitioner is protected from ego-inflation and worldly entanglements.

Together, these techniques create a complete system for **Indriya Nigrahana**—balancing physical discipline, mental training, breath control, psychological insight, ethical living, and spiritual devotion. Practiced regularly, these methods purify the mind, train the senses, and awaken the higher Self. They lead ultimately to the tranquil freedom of the sage—who moves among sense objects, but remains untouched, serene, and inwardly fulfilled.

This is not the suppression of life, but the liberation of consciousness.

This is not repression of pleasure, but the discovery of a deeper bliss.

This is not renunciation of the world, but the realization of the Self in all.

Through discipline and grace, the path of *Indriya Nigrahana* becomes the path of awakening.

**Om Tat Sat.**

# Integrating the Techniques into Daily Practice

The techniques of *Indriya Nigrahana* are most effective when woven into the rhythms of everyday life. While philosophical insight lays the foundation, daily repetition is what transforms it into lived wisdom. A sincere practitioner should strive to devote **at least 30 to 60 minutes each morning** to a structured routine incorporating these techniques, followed by **brief, intermittent practices throughout the day**. Over time, these become second nature, reshaping the habitual tendencies of the senses and realigning the inner compass toward the Self.

## A. Example Morning Routine Practice

Begin your day in stillness and reverence. **As soon as you wake up**, invoke the presence of the Divine into your body and mind. Offer a heartfelt prayer for **guidance and grace**, and recall the ethical vows you are committed to—celibacy (*brahmacharya*), nonviolence (*ahimsa*), truthfulness (*satya*), and other principles you cherish. Remind yourself that **all results belong to God**, and that you are merely an instrument of divine will. This humble remembrance wards off ego inflation and prevents unhealthy attachments from forming during the day. Mentally bring to mind images of saints, sages, and realized beings—both past and present—and ask for their subtle guidance. Even in their physical absence, this **mental association with enlightened beings** creates a protective and uplifting inner environment.

Next, move into **rhythmic pranayama with kumbhaka**. A simple pattern—inhale for 6 seconds, hold for 12, exhale for 6—is sufficient, though you may adjust the durations as per your capacity. Ensure the practice is gentle and never forceful. Within 5 to 10 minutes, this breathing technique will **calm the nervous system**, steady the *prāṇa*, and bring the wandering mind under control. Breath is the bridge between the senses and the soul; mastering it each morning begins the process of mastering all else.

Now, with your breath tranquil, practice **conscious withdrawal of the senses into the center**. Visualize each of your five senses drawing inward—merging into each other—and then retreating into the spiritual heart, the seat of pure awareness. This inner retraction for even 5–10 minutes trains the senses to listen to the voice of the Self rather than chasing after outer objects. You may notice an immediate sense of inner quietude.

Once this inward state is established, transition into **mindfulness meditation**. Sit still and witness your thoughts, emotions, and sensations without suppression. Simply observe. Allow the mind to settle naturally. After a few minutes, begin the **neti-neti practice**: mentally disidentify from each arising thought or feeling by affirming, “I am not this.” In doing so, center yourself in the **Purusha**, the pure witnessing consciousness that is unchanging amidst the flux of *prakṛiti*. Spend 5 minutes in mindfulness and then 5 more in neti-neti, allowing yourself to rest in the quiet, unwavering light of your true Self.

With awareness sharpened, move into a short session of **body and mind taming**. Command your body with intention: raise your leg and hold it for a count of ten, or direct another limb in deliberate motion. This trains the **karmendriyas** to obey your will. Then, practice mental control: ask your mind to fix on an external object—say a candle flame or a flower—for a count

of 30. After that, shift focus to a different object for 15 seconds. This back-and-forth between attention and detachment builds *voluntary control* over the wandering mind and teaches it to obey higher direction.

Follow this with **viveka and vairāgya contemplation**. Reflect deeply: *“Engaging in sensual pleasures may give fleeting joy, but they inevitably bring pain through attachment. When I do not get what I crave, I suffer. Therefore, let me center myself in the Witness, in the Self that is always free, always fulfilled.”* Repeat these thoughts silently. Remind yourself that you are **not the body, nor the mind, nor the fluctuating emotions**. You are the steady consciousness behind all change. The ego, a product of conditioning and desire, is not your true Self. When this false identity dissolves, what remains is the **infinite, blissful awareness**—*sat-chit-ānanda*—in which the whole universe arises and subsides.

Then shift to **concentration practice (dharana)**. Choose a simple object of focus—perhaps the inflow and outflow of breath, a mantra, or a mental image—and hold your attention there for 5 to 10 minutes. This divided but continuous attention trains the mind to function in the world without becoming entangled in it. With practice, even while engaging in tasks, you will find it possible to remain rooted in inner awareness. This steady, two-fold focus leads to natural **sense withdrawal**, as the mind becomes deeply absorbed.

Afterward, engage in **tapasya**—a small act of voluntary endurance. For instance, you might raise your arms overhead and hold them there for 1–2 minutes or perform an asana that creates mild discomfort. Do not overexert, but allow yourself to experience **the burn of willpower**. This heat (*tapas*) purifies resistance and trains the body and mind to yield to your conscious command.

Then, take a **sankalpa**, a strong mental resolution for the day. With deep inner conviction, affirm that you will uphold your vows, speak and act ethically, remain cheerful, and never allow yourself to sink into dullness or despair. A calm, joyful mind is necessary for sense-control; your sankalpa sets the tone.

Finally, **offer everything to the Divine**. Whatever you have done, and whatever will unfold during the day—place it all at the feet of God. Ask for protection and guidance. Surrender your ego and feel the presence of grace. This final step completes the cycle: from remembrance, through discipline, to surrender.

## **B. Throughout the Day: Brief Intermittent Practices**

After the morning discipline, spiritual practice continues **throughout the day** in subtle, brief, but potent forms. Always try to maintain **a state of focused attention**. Even when fully immersed in work or conversation, keep a portion of awareness anchored in the breath, in a mantra, or in the quiet space of the witness. This **divided attention** becomes the golden thread that links your inner state to your outer action.

Whenever possible, **pause for mini-breaks of mindfulness**. Take a few deep breaths. Shift your gaze inward. Practice *neti-neti* silently: “I am not this agitation... not this body... I am the one who watches.” At times of intense emotion, **apply viveka**: reason with the mind gently, explain

why chasing a certain impulse will not bring lasting peace. Speak to your thoughts, as Jung recommended, and ask them what they truly need. Often, your higher wisdom will supply the answer and calm the craving.

At other times, practice **conscious sense withdrawal**: briefly close the eyes, or draw the attention inward from the five senses into the heart center. Even a few seconds of pratyāhāra at intervals resets your sensory field and brings you back to equilibrium.

When lustful, angry, or indulgent thoughts arise, meet them with **viveka and vairāgya**. Remind yourself: *“This is fleeting. The pleasure is small, but the cost is large. Let me turn instead to something higher.”* And in every such moment, **invoke the Divine**. Whisper God’s name, mentally bow, or offer a silent prayer. Your **guru or chosen deity** is always present; let them be your refuge.

If no living guru is near, **keep mental company with enlightened beings** by remembering their lives, their words, or simply their presence. This is the power of satsang in thought-form. Their subtle influence will uplift your mind and shield your senses.

## Final Guidance

If you can only adopt a few practices at first, let them be these: **frequent invocation of God**, repeated **asking for grace and inner guidance**, and **continuous divided attention**—keeping one part of the mind anchored in the breath or mantra, and the other engaged in worldly duty. Alongside this, practice **intermittent mindfulness** and *neti-neti* to remain in your true, unchanging nature—the **unwavering Purusha**. These few habits alone, practiced sincerely, will begin to transform your inner landscape and lead you steadily along the path of mastery.

*In the great silence of your still heart, may the senses bow down, the mind surrender, and the soul rise. The discipline of Indriya Nigraha is not a burden, but a blessing. With each day of practice, you are not renouncing life—you are reclaiming your Self.*

## Closing Words

Sense-control is no longer optional; it is the antidote to algorithmic hijack of human attention. These fourteen techniques, rooted in the timeless revelatory wisdom of India, offer a complete and graded path—from the first physical turn-away to the subtlest inner absorption in **nāda**. May this manual guide every earnest reader to unshakable poise, luminous clarity, and the bliss that is one's own true nature.

—*Dr. Gandhi Bhaskar Patrudu Lanka*



# INDRIYA NIGRAHA

Indriya Nigraha refers to the esoteric Hindu discipline of controlling the senses, or indriya. By managing the sensory faculties, one can master the mind, achieve self-control, and cultivate spirituality. Rooted in ancient Hindu wisdom, the practice involves techniques such as meditation, breath control, and withdrawal of the senses to harness and direct one's inner energies.

